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1836.

A HISTORY OF RUSSIA.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.



H. Corbould, del. *F. Finden, sc.*

The Revolt of the Strelitz

London
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HISTORY OF RUSSIA.

CHAPTER I.

DIFFICULTY IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MATERIALS OF RUSSIAN HISTORY. — ITS CAUSES. — DIVERSITY OF NATIONS. — ABORIGINES. — THE SLAVI. — AFFINITY BETWEEN THE LANGUAGES OF THE SLAVI AND THE LATINS. — LAWS AND HABITS OF THE SLAVI. — THEIR POETRY, MUSIC, AND MYTHOLOGY. — FORM OF GOVERNMENT. — MODE OF ELECTION. — EARLIEST SETTLEMENTS IN RUSSIA. — THE FINNS, THE TARTARS, AND THE MONGOLES. — HISTORICAL ERRORS. — INTERMIXTURE OF TONGUES, AND DISPERSION OF TRIBES.

THE geography and statistics of Russia have never been satisfactorily recorded. Except, perhaps, some of the estimates collected at great pains within our own time, there are no available documents of that description extant that can be safely relied upon. Systematic inquiry into the resources of the empire may be said to have been first instituted by Catherine II.; and, although the investigation has been continued under each succeeding reign with increased energy, the results are still pretty much the same. The clergy, who furnished the substance of the greater part of the returns, were generally ignorant of the arts of reading and writing. It is not, therefore, very surprising that their statements should be as apocryphal as those of their ancestors.

The magnitude of the empire presented one difficulty in the collection of correct information; the jealousy of the petty authorities another; and the monkish character of the imperial despotism a third. The only

authentic materials for the statistician or historian were the MS. chronicles amassed from time to time in the libraries. But the imperial permission was a necessary preliminary to their inspection; and that was so rarely extended as to amount to actual prohibition. The chronicles were valuable in so far as they contained the chief part, if not the whole, of the materials from whence the early history of Russia could be derived. But they bore all the characteristics of the rude periods they registered. They were imperfect, generally mysterious, in their construction, and, according to the genius of the narrator, tediously elaborate, or abrupt to obscurity. Much that they contained, too, appeared to be conjectural, if not fabulous; but the impossibility of restoring truth to its place in history, from amidst the mass of barbarous legends in which it was buried, left the sifting of the grains to the unaided discernment of the erudite and the industrious. These MSS. were rendered still more dismal by being written in the ancient Slavonic dialect, which has long gone into desuetude. One or two modern historians attempted to penetrate the labyrinth; but they were baffled in its windings, and came out bewildered. The works which they have given to the world as the produce of its research are no better than ponderous monuments of inextricable confusion.

All received authorities, consequently, differ upon facts. Commentators sometimes grew bold from the very want of materials, which made detection doubtful or impossible; sometimes obscure, by leaving the enigmas of dates, names, and events unsolved as they found them; and sometimes, as if to exemplify the peculiar difficulties of their labours, inconsistent, by ingeniously contriving to contradict themselves. By the careful examination and collation of all, an approximation may be made towards truth in the more uncertain periods; and correct data may be established in the modern history of the empire. To accomplish this, reference must be had to innumerable collateral testi-

monies, that come in occasionally to strengthen a speculation or elucidate an obscurity; but this cloud-like train of witnesses becomes less necessary as we advance; and, from the period when Russia first took a prominent part in the great theatre of European politics, we may nearly dispense with them altogether.

The extraordinary varieties of nations or tribes embraced within the girdle of Russia, present an aspect quite unexampled in the history of any other country. Wherever other nations have, by subjugation or gradual admixture, extended their sway, and drawn in distinct families of people under the same rule, it is generally found that the habits, language, and religion of the dominant power influence the rest, and finally absorb all the broad features of external distinction. But in Russia, tribes the most dissimilar are still distinguished by their own peculiar marks, moral and physical. They severally resemble the insulated Magyars, who, surrounded by strange tongues, constantly invaded by foreign arms, and maintaining a regular domestic and commercial intercourse with other countries, have yet successfully preserved their ancient usages and language, receiving hardly any perceptible modification of their own distinctive character. In Russia there are numerous nations exhibiting the phenomenon of proximity without sympathy or resemblance. These people, politically united, are yet dissociated in customs, in religion, and in language. In each, of course, the particular dialect has suffered slight corruptions; the primitive belief has become tinged with the heresies of time; and costume, perhaps, may have undergone some passing changes, for the sake of convenience. But in none has any single attribute merged its identity in the general body. The languages, although corrupted, retain their generic signs, and survive; the bases of religion remain unaltered; and the Finn and the Slavonian are still separately designated by their dress.

This fact, which directs our attention to the remote times when those nations were first gathered on the

soil, deserves consideration. In the anomalous page of human history it opens, we see the workings of two opposite principles. Men are brought together who cannot amalgamate. They act in concert for objects common to all; but in the other pursuits of life their intercommunion resembles that of strangers. The civil contract procures their allegiance to the one legislatorial head; but with all its restrictions, its bounties, and its demands, it has failed to make them become one people. To preserve reciprocal amity and general obedience under such circumstances, measures of abstract justice would not be sufficient. In order to reconcile such conflicting elements it was necessary to suppress their separate development. Nothing but tyranny of the most summary kind could have saved so vast and diversified a dominion from dissolution. Accordingly, the concentration of these hordes was gradually effected through ages of anarchy, treachery, intrigue, bloodshed, and oppression. Nature was violated by the policy that brought them together, and man seems to have vindicated the outrage upon himself by the means he adopted to perpetuate it.

The origin of the many nations that originally peopled Russia has long been a question, or rather a series of questions, upon which history has shed little light. For the most part, we are forced to be content with the vague answers of tradition, or the daring wonders of romance. Conjecture, more or less plausible, supplies the place of direct authority. The researches of scientific men assist us to some grounds of judgment; and, strengthened by distant resemblances, corroborative analogies, and philological discoveries we are enabled to discover some hidden links of the great chain of facts; but connection and clearness are still wanted.

There are many reasons for believing that the greater part of the numerous tribes that covered the face of Russia previously to the ninth century sprang from the Slavonian stock. The names and localities of these tribes would weary such readers as consult history for

its utility, and could afford no benefit to others. That the Goths inhabited a portion of Russia in the remotest periods of antiquity, has been surmised on some apparently feasible grounds. The Russians are yet called Guthes by the Lithuanians. When they were driven out by the Huns, it is conjectured by some writers that a portion of them intermixed with the Sarmates, and thus produced the parent stock that afterwards peopled Russia. Others, on the contrary, refer the primitive population to the Sarmates alone; nor can this opinion, more than any other on this involved point, be combated by better arguments than speculation and analogy. This much, however, is certain, that the names and the possessions of the ancient tribes were subject to perpetual change, owing to the restlessness of their nature, and the constant inroads from Asia, which occasionally swept away whole settlements, defaced established boundaries, and infused a new character into the provinces they desolated. Sometimes, however, invaders established settlements; and by these fluctuations in the process of population, the country at length became irregularly inhabited.

When the Slavi first settled in Europe is unknown. It is probable they were established there for some ages before the foundation of Rome.* The ancient languages of Greece and Rome exhibit a curious affinity with the language of the Slavi; and, as it is not likely that a race so matured in the art of war, and in the missionary and diplomatic arts of colonisation and incorporation, were indebted to their southern neighbours for the kindred parts of their vocabulary, the conclusion is, that the Slavi existed in Europe long before the progress of nations or languages was placed upon record. But there are internal proofs, that appear, on a literal examination of the languages, of a higher and more important value. The words in common to the ancient Slavi and the Latins are those that belong to the wants and the condition of the very earliest stage of society,

* Dolci, Gatterer, Schloezer, Malte-Brun.

and such as would have been obviously employed in the first formation of a language. The roots were planted by the half-savage Slavi. The fragment of that race that broke off, and afterwards created the Roman empire (themselves again dispersed by the Slavi and others), took with them but this rude foundation, which, under more prosperous destinies, and in a more polished era, grew up into the classical structure that was completed in the age of Augustus. The Latins then were indebted to the Slavi for the elements of speech, having been united in their origin; but, separating at an early period, they perfected distinct languages; which fact is abundantly borne out by the character of the analogies that exist between them. The antiquity of the Slavi is thus thrown back to an indefinite distance of time. We have sufficient evidence of the extent of their emigration, of their power, their wandering propensities, their vicissitudes, their glories, and their boldness; but we can no where discover a clue to the point of time when they first appeared. The most probable conjecture is, that they came from the east; that convenient region to which all doubting historians are accustomed to refer every unclaimed tribe they find crossing the path of their researches. Of course, by this means we readily trace them up to Japhet, the third son of Noah, who is fortunate enough to be considered, in many veracious chronicles, as the parent of a thousand hives. But this sort of knowledge is of no avail. It merely proves that the Slavi, as well as every other race of men, were descended from the descendants of Adam.

The name Slavi is, by some writers, supposed to be derived from the word *Slava*, signifying *glory;* which would naturally lead to the hypothesis that it was not their earliest title, as they must have had some other before they acquired that which was founded upon their exploits. Other antiquarians discover the etymon in the word *Slovo*, which means *word*, or *speech*. In either case, we must assign an earlier origin to the Slavi than

there are records to authenticate. They had either earned great fame by heroic achievements, of which no chronicle remains; or their language was distinguished by its force, its copiousness, or its fitness, at a period antecedent to the diffusion of any other. But whether these suppositions be true or false, their antiquity remains equally impenetrable.

They appear to have penetrated into various countries in troops, and to have subjugated, by force or treachery, the provinces through which they passed, establishing themselves in colonies as they travelled onwards; and gradually extending, with different success, the sphere of their action and their power. The earliest accounts we possess of their diffusion are scarcely credible. They only yield to the Arabians in the universality of their dominion. From the shores of the Adriatic, says an historian, to the coast of the Frozen Ocean, and from the shores of the Baltic through the whole length of Europe and Asia, as far as America, and to the neighbourhood of Japan, we every where meet with Slavonian nations either ruling or ruled.

The character of this people was such as the uncertainty and peril of their habits were calculated to produce. They were courageous and reckless of life; cruel and rapacious; prompt to secure, by any means, the conquest that was necessary to their wants; but, as their excursions were undertaken from meaner motives than aggrandisement or ambition, being chiefly to make provision for their immediate necessities, or to procure resources for a future supply, their intervals of repose were passed in supineness and indolence. They were hospitable to the excess of that virtue. It was a law amongst them that a poor man might steal from his rich neighbour the means of entertaining his guest. The debasing usages of the east respecting the treatment of females they carried with them into the north. Women were considered as drudges and slaves. Polygamy was allowed; and the power of the husband asserted beyond the grave. Widows were consumed at the funeral pile;

and, as if to complete the last show of household authority, a female slave was sacrificed on the body of her master.* This custom arose from the notion that women, wives and slaves, were destined to serve their lords in the next world as well as in this, and they were accordingly put to death in order that their lord should not be left in want of their attendance. It is probable that the suttee of the Indians may be traced to the same origin. All the male children of the Slavi were dedicated to war; but the curse of proscription awaited the females, even at their birth. Whenever it happened that the number of female infants in a family appeared to exceed the probable wants of the community, they were at once destroyed. These inhuman customs of the parents generated a corresponding inhumanity in their offspring. The old and feeble were deserted by their children, and left to expire of hunger and disease. These revolting practices were to be attributed to the unsettled and migratory habits of the people. Their mode of life required that they should always be prepared for action. They struck off the incumbrances of age and superabundant infancy, in order that their motions might be free to rove wherever their vagrant desires pointed. The same inordinate thirst after new scenes and strange adventures that enabled them to conquer those sacred associations which, under a different organisation of society, are universally reverenced, also enabled them to surmount the physical obstacles that constantly lay before them. We know that the Scythians removed their families from place to place in waggons, covered with hides to protect them from the inclemency of the weather; but we have no means of ascertaining how the Slavi crossed seas and rivers, traversed vast deserts, penetrated untrodden forests, and made their way over trackless mountains.

It was amongst such a people, who lived in a constant state of excitement, that poetry may be believed to have originated. The earliest Slavonian records describe

* Yakut.

them as practising the arts of music and poetry. In the sixth century, the Winidæ, a northern extended branch of the Slavi, informed the emperor of Constantinople that their highest pleasures were derived from music, that in their journeys they seldom encumbered themselves with arms, but always carried lutes and harps of their own workmanship.* There were other musical instruments, too, which are still retained amongst their descendants. In their warlike expeditions they never appeared without music. Procopius informs us that they were once so much engrossed by their amusements within sight of the enemy, as to have been surprised by a Greek general, before they could arrange any measures of defence. Many of the war odes and ballads of the Slavi are still in existence. They exhibit a wild and original spirit; are replete with mythogical allusions; and those that are of a peaceful cast are particularly remarkable for the quiet sweetness of their character, of a kind quite distinct from the elaborate and artificial felicity of the Greek and Roman pastorals. ✓

The religion of the Slavi resembled in all essential respects the mythology of the Romans, to which were superadded some features of a more superstitious and cruel nature. They offered up human victims to their Jupiter, who, built up with a trunk of hard wood, a head of silver, ears and mustachios of gold, and legs of iron, was called Perune. Like all other rude nations of antiquity, they trembled before thunder, which they received as the voice of the god in anger. But their notions of a supreme deity were very vague; for, although they entertained some half-formed idea of the existence of a First Cause, they yet inconsistently attributed all events to chance. They personified the elements in a similar way. They had their sacred rivers and forests. They had their god of the waters, and attendant dryads and sea-nymphs: also a benevolent god, who presided over their games and festivals; a goddess of love and marriage; a pastoral divinity; and a goddess of the

* Karamsin.

chace; nor did they omit some hieroglyphical Penates, whom the boors of Russia to this day scrawl in uncouth figures on the walls of their houses. The outline of the Slavonian mythology was not destitute of imaginative qualities. All the leading or chief deities had subordinate ones, to perform the functions identified with the elements or objects to which they were assigned. Their fauns, and satyrs, and forest spirits, and demons of fire, and of midnight dreams and pestilence, were all conceived distinctly enough, and helped out a sort of system that was well calculated to act upon the fears of a superstitious race. There were innumerable idols of various degrees of power, and all differing in particular attributes. The ceremonies by which these were propitiated were usually very costly, as were the temples in which they were performed, and the apparel of the priests who officiated. These ceremonies were generally closed by horrible immolations to the frenzy, or abandoned festivals to the honour of the god. The mixture of the sanguinary and the ridiculous, of the poetical and the animal nature, of the elevated and the degraded, were visible throughout all their rites. Not a solitary want or enjoyment of mankind appears to have escaped the fertile invention of the Slavi, in the corresponding application of their image-worship. They had gods for all possible occasions, and gorgeous preliminaries to their invocation. But this kind of religion wanted unity. It was incomplete, both in its materials and its purpose. It made the savage more savage, and the timid more timid. To quail before the storm, or to dare it, were the only effects it produced. It never softened ferocity, nor inspired its believers with reverence for eternal wisdom. It was the rudest religion of external nature, and exacted servitude without love, or reason, or hope. In this, of course, the Slavonian superstition was not singular; but, perhaps, it was the most complicated and comprehensive that prevailed amongst the barbarous tribes that flourished in the age of the world in which it arose.

The Slavi, in the original state in which we find them, admitted no particular form of authority in the government of their affairs. Their paramount doctrine of chance had much to do in settling the mode by which their domestic concerns were managed. The people at first met in large bodies in some of their temples, or holy places. Gradually the national concerns fell into the hands of particular persons, who, according to their superior military talent, and the amount of individual esteem in which they were held, insensibly acquired the ascendancy. Out of this unconscious delegation at last sprung the hereditary tenure: fathers who had deserved well of their countrymen bequeathed their honours to their children; that which was in the beginning but a personal distinction, ultimately became a permanent dignity; and finally, the formless chaos assumed a shape; chiefs and civil judges and petty magistrates springing up rapidly enough when once the lawlessness of the great body had been overcome. But the Slavi were slow to yield the right of election. They asserted for a long time the privilege of electing and deposing their rulers. The principal seats of power were, however, rendered hereditary by force, and the popular prerogative, thus extinguished by one decisive innovation, could never again be recalled. The manner of the election of a voyvode, or duke, in Carinthia, may be taken as a proof of the tenacity with which the people clung to their electoral privileges as long as they could. When the duke was elected he was ordered to appear before his constituents, clothed in the poorest attire. A throne, formed of a huge stone, was placed in the centre, upon which was seated a common labourer. Before this organ of the multitude the new governor took the oaths of office, which bound him to respect truth and religion, and to support the friendless. This temporary magistrate then descended; the duke ascended; and the vows of fidelity were immediately subscribed by the people. Such was the simple but impressive form by which

rulers in the early stage of society were pledged to the interests of their subjects.

But the stability of governments created by such tribes of wanderers could not be great. All the Slavonian races were overthrown about the middle of the fourth century, and united with the Ostrogoths under one dynasty. The Huns, however, subsequently subdued both the masters and the slaves; and the blended empire was felled to the earth. But the Huns, in another century, were themselves hemmed in and destroyed by the Finnish Ungres and Bulgarians on the Danube, and from the opposite side by the Gothic Gepidi. These revolutions were rapid and overwhelming; but they did not succeed in the complete extirpation of the Slavi, who, after a short interval, appeared in Dacia, and possessed themselves of a considerable part of the northern shore of the Danube, the old river of their homage. From thence they descended, in company with the barbarians of the north, upon the Roman provinces, and mainly assisted in accomplishing the downfal of the Roman name.* They then pressed on the territory of the Gepidi, whose extirpation was effected chiefly by the Avari; but not without the assumption of a right of conquest over the Slavi. We next find the Bulgarians spreading over Dacia, and forcing out the Slavonian inhabitants, more by the severity of their fiscal regulations than by any direct appeal to arms. Those Slavi who retreated from their dwellings on the shores of the Danube were again scattered over Europe; one branch of them settling in Poland, and another in Russia. This took place about the middle or close of the seventh century. The peculiar states formed by the dispersed stock are enumerated as follow, by a modern historian: — Russian, Polish, Bohemian, German, Illyrian, Hungarian (perhaps the most peculiar of all), and Turkish Slavonians. It will

* This portion of the history of the Slavi, which is full of interest, but does not properly come within the compass of this work, will be found re-ated at some length in Gibbon.

be seen at a glance, what a large part of this distribution falls into the Russian empire.

Those branches of the Slavi that come within the compass of this history were cast away into a variety of settlements, and in the course of time became known by distinct appellations. The numberless tribes that thus spring up before us in the examination of the Russian annals, and the vicissitudes to which they were subjected, considerably interrupt the regular narrative of the formation and progress of the empire. The attention becomes confused amidst such a perpetual succession of new interests. A sort of baronial tenure seems to have prevailed in a variety of places; but, as it was won and consolidated by force, so it yielded in its turn to the first invader who had power enough to subdue it. Throughout this period of distracted rule many intervals occur when we entirely lose sight of some of these petty despotisms; and, when we next come to look for them, we find that they had long since expired in their own weakness, or sunk before some mightier bands of adventurers. Thus the face of this vast country for many centuries was continually overrun by disastrous conquests and fierce revolutions. It would be impossible to carry the mind, with a clear adherence to order, through these diversities of names and features; and, in preference to interrupting the course of the more prominent and connected features of the Russian chronology, we have collected under one head, in the appendix, a summary of the most authentic accounts of all the nations, or tribes, that may be properly classed under the denomination of the population of Russia; and we have included in that document such historical particulars as were thought necessary to elucidate the general object to which they are subordinate. The account of these several tribes is necessary as a clue to the complete history, although it would be inconvenient and out of place here.

But the aborigines of Russia must be traced to other sources independently of the Slavi, who, however, claim

the largest share in the original population. The Finns, themselves sub-divided into numerous tribes, the Tartars, and the Mongoles, form, with the Slavi, the primitive national roots. Incursions from the north, at different periods, laid the foundations of different small states; but these again intermingling with others, both in war and commerce, confounded the distinctions of territory, and ultimately introduced into the spoken language of the people, and the catalogue of proper names, such a jargon of mixed words as to have led some modern historians into very erroneous conjectures. It is obvious enough that such a complicated web of tribes must have abounded with the elements of confusion. Nor does it require much forethought to guard the patient investigator against deriving rash opinions from circumstances so fruitful of mistakes. Parts of the country so frequently changed masters, retaining always a fragment of the nation dispossessed, that the titles of honour, the names of places, and many of the conventional phrases in different dialects, became unavoidably engrafted on the vernacular language. It was impossible at any period of the imperial power to harmonise these discrepancies, and reduce them to order. The people were ignorant and boorish; and the rulers were too much occupied in the task of enforcing their arbitrary sway to attend to the less important labours of social and civil uniformity. The consequence is that, to the present hour, we find incongruities of this description in every part of Russia.

This review of the aborigines may be concluded by observing generally, that it appears to be a false assumption that attributes to the Huns any share in the original subjugation or population of the soil; that, in the south, the Slavi established themselves especially, making great accessions of territory from time to time; that the Scythians occupied the central lands; and that the Finns, who were a powerless and scattered people, spread themselves over the north of Russia, and, more by the force of numbers than by their skill or valour, gave to that portion of the empire its earliest inhabitants.

CHAP. II.

CONTESTED ORIGIN OF THE NAME OF RUSSIA. — EXTENT AND POPULATION. — FIRST SLAVONIAN STATE. — THE VARANGIAN USURPATION. — RURIK, THE PIRATE. — HE ESTABLISHES A TOWN, AND SEIZES UPON NOVGOROD. — THE FIRST GRAND PRINCEDOM ERECTED. — THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE COUNTRY INTO DEPENDENT PRINCIPALITIES. — DEATH OF RURIK. — REGENCY OF OLEG. — PREDATORY EXCURSIONS. — MURDER OF OSKOLD AND DIR. — UNION OF KIEF AND NOVGOROD. — EXPEDITION AGAINST BYZANTIUM. — SUBMISSION OF LEO THE PHILOSOPHER. — TREATY OF PEACE. — DEATH OF OLEG. — IGOR THE FIRST. — REVOLT OF THE PRINCIPALITIES. — WAR OF EXTERMINATION CARRIED INTO BYZANTIUM. — SIGNAL DEFEAT OF THE RUSSIANS. — SECOND EXPEDITION, AND TREATY OF PEACE. — DESCENT ON THE DREOLIANS. — ASSASSINATION OF IGOR.

We have seen that the country at a very remote age of the world was peopled by a great variety of tribes, all speaking different languages, and marked by individual peculiarities. But how those tribes came to be designated by the common appellation of Russians, does not appear so satisfactorily. Malte-Brun and others hold the opinion that the name was derived from the Rhoxolani or Rhoxani *, one of the Gothic tribes that early penetrated into Russia. Lacombe, but without affording a shadow of proof, says that a prince named Russus gave his name to Russia. It has been attempted to be shown that the Varangians, or Northmanni, called themselves Russians; and, as they undoubtedly had a considerable share in founding the Russian state, the hypothesis takes a colour of probability. One conjecture which seems to us as likely to be correct as any of the rest, has escaped the

* The transition from Rhoxani to Rhossani or Rossani is easy enough. In the Doric and Æolic dialects the *x* was expressed by *s*.

sagacity of the Russian annalists.* Amongst the propitious divinities of the Slavi, were the subordinate goddesses of the waters and forests. These beautiful nymphs were called Russalki. These were always represented in the most picturesque half-costume, and the most poetical attitudes; and the people offered sacrifices to them as to the most beneficent of their deities. Now the Slavi, having been mainly concerned in the aboriginal colonisation of Russia, might, at the beginning, have given the name of their favourite divinities to the new country; and it is not forcing the supposition too far to suggest, that the name might have lapsed in the revolutions of time, and been revived where we first find it recorded in the Bertinian Annals, about the year 839. At all events, the hypothesis is not destitute of some claims to consideration; although it must be granted, that those authorities upon whom most reliance ought to be placed, agree in deriving the generic name from the source pointed out by Malte-Brun.

The superficial extent of Russia has varied in a greater degree than that of any other country with the political changes to which the government has been subjected. Russia occupies an incredible space upon the map. It comprehends a vast portion of Europe, and a third part of all Asia. It thus naturally divides itself into two great parts, separated from each other by the great Caucasian chain, the Oural mountains, and the

* Count Segur, whose "History of Russia and of Peter the Great" was no doubt intended to contain the essence of all that was worth preserving in the annals of the country, while it is, in reality, no better than a bad chronology of the leading events, makes some very foolish blunders in his own dogmatical way. For instance, he asks, "How do we know that the appellation of Russian, generally adopted since the time of Rurik, was not derived from him?" The answer is simply, because we know that it existed in Russia previously to the time of Rurik, and, therefore, could not have been derived from him Again, he inquires, "May not the Slavonians, whose demi-gods of the waters were called Russalks, have given that name to the Scandinavian Varangian pirates, who were more truly the demi-gods of the billows that foamed under their keels?" The answer is, that the Russalks, or Russalki, were not demi gods of the waters, but nymphs of the woods and rivers · and that, therefore, it is not at all likely the Slavi could have chosen their name as a designation for the ferocious Varangians, who were not only their insidious enemies, but who became their sovereigns by usurpation.

Oural river. That part which spreads into Asia covers a surface of about 700,000 square leagues, about 280,000 of which are productive; the rest, which lie near the north pole, and off in the eastern direction from the desolate heights of Mongolia, the border of the Chinese empire, being utterly lifeless and unsusceptible of culture. This immense tract constitutes that portion of the Russian dominions called Siberia. The southern extremity, bounded by China, is formed of a lofty and sterile table land, in which the rivers take their source, and from thence the country gradually slopes towards the Frozen Ocean, into which it empties its waters. The only diversities in this enormous province are from a greater to a lesser degree of inclement climate and barrenness. The middle and southern latitudes are comparatively fertile and cultivated; but the northern and eastern parts are covered with dense woods, or locked up in eternal ice. In the south the summers are insupportably hot, and the winters rigid in an equal degree; or rather, the seasons are always in the extreme, and may be considered as producing nearly the same effects upon the human frame. These miserable deserts, separated from Europe by mountains and rivers, and from China by a border of stone and ice, and running up to Behring's Straits, which divide them from America, are scantily peopled by a squalid and scattered population of 2,000,000 inhabitants. The fur of the wild animals that wander through its forests, the metal that is dug out of its mountains, and the oil of the fish that live in its gloomy seas, are the chief produce which this extensive territory sends into Europe.

The European division of the empire contains a population of about 58,000,000, on a surface of 100,000 miles. From the Oural mountains, the plain makes a gradual descent to the west, where it is terminated by the Baltic, and the neighbouring states of Sweden and Prussia. This great surface presents many varieties of climate and soil, and has been di-

vided into three regions, the hot, the temperate, and the cold. The northern part falls towards the White Sea and the Frozen Ocean, is incapable of cultivation, and is, for the most part, woody and marshy. The richest and most fertile part of European Russia is that which stretches to the southward, and lies between the boundaries of the Caspian Sea and the sea of Azof. In that territory the soil and climate are equally favourable to production.

These enormous possessions are the fruits of constant acquisition throughout centuries of war; for, although Russia, even from the earliest period of which we possess a veritable record, was a very extensive and increasing empire, yet the nucleus of this gigantic dominion was comparatively small. It occupied the region of the Volkhof, extending to the Dneipr, and was divided into different principalities, under the various names of the tribes that, from time to time, settled there. By its position it was equally exposed to irruptions from the north and the east, and became the scene of those rude conflicts that, in the beginning of the Christian era, took place between the swarms of barbarians that roved at large over those vast tracts of country. When the Slavi were forced by the Bulgarians to abandon their settlements on the banks of the Danube, a portion of them repaired to the shores of the Dneipr, the Neva, and the Volkhof. They found some Sarmatian tribes already established there, and speedily subdued them and drove them out. About this period the first Slavonian estate arose, the capital of which was called Kief.* The original building of Kief may, perhaps, be referred with truth to the Sarmatians; but, in their hands, it never was a place of consequence. For a period of several centuries after this we lose sight altogether of this early government; and until towards the close of the ninth century, when the authentic history of Russia begins, the interval is dark and silent.

* The name Kief is taken from the Sarmatian word *Kivi*, signifying *mountain*.

The capital of the Slavi, who had settled northwards on the river Volkhof, was called Novgorod *, the annals of which are equally involved in obscurity. But sufficient is actually known to enable us to arrive at this conclusion that, in those remote times, the germs of the future empire were laid in the kingdoms or settlements of which Kief and Novgorod were the chief seats. Of these Novgorod was the more considerable in extent and powerful in resources. It was so distinguished above all rival states, as to have given occasion to a phrase which grew into a common expression, — "Who shall dare to oppose God and great Novgorod!" It carried on a vigorous commercial intercourse with the people on both shores of the Baltic, and even effected relations with Constantinople. † Its commerce extended to Persia, and to India itself; and from Byzantium to Vineta, a city on the Ouder. The geographical position of Novgorod, and the great traffic which it was thus enabled to cultivate, naturally enough excited the jealousy of the surrounding petty principalities, which was not a little aided by domestic dissensions that arose amongst the Novgorodians, either from the pride of power, or the licentiousness of inordinate wealth. The government was a republic; which, through the many opportunities it afforded to popular discontent within, increased the dangers that were to be apprehended from without. Novgorod was encircled by enemies, who possessed all the outlets through which the foreign trade was transacted; the Varangians, a fierce and hardy race of Scandinavian pirates, were masters of the Baltic; so that, both by land and by water, the paths of its merchandise were garrisoned with foes.

Although the republic embraced a very large space, and the population was both numerous and bold, it was not strong enough to resist these coincident difficulties.

* The word Novgorod signifies New-town, which would imply the existence of an older town. There remained until lately some ancient ruins in the neighbourhood, which were supposed to be the remains of the first erection.

† Constantine Porphyrogenitus.

Two nations in the immediate neighbourhood of Novgorod, the Tschuder and the Biarmians, who lived principally by plunder, and who do not appear to have had any fixed form of government, occasionally committed depredations on the borders; and, according to the practice of war then prevailing, carried off whatever spoils they could secure. But these loose tribes, in their single incursions, never made any great impression on their more powerful neighbour. The Novgorodians always repelled them; or, at the worst, suffered but slightly from their inroads. Now, however, that these nations united upon the frontiers, while the Varangians hung out their flag in the Baltic, and anarchy distracted the councils at home, the struggle for the maintenance of superiority became hopeless. The question was between the abandonment of that traffic which had aroused the cupidity of their enemies, or direct and complete submission to the most powerful. The dilemma was soon resolved. The Novgorodians were too much accustomed to victory to capitulate without a struggle, and too wealthy not to attempt the purchase by large pecuniary sacrifices of their future security. They accordingly made overtures to the Varangians, who were mere mercenaries, fighting for the highest paymaster; and, in lack of employment, pillaging on their own account. There was no difficulty in procuring their services; for, like the modern Swiss, they were always open to hire. This reinforcement enabled the Novgorodians to overthrow their domestic enemies effectually. When the war was over, the hired troops were paid off, and the people expected that, now there was no farther occasion for their aid, they would depart, and return to their ships. The Varangians, however, were not so easily dismissed. They felt that a great nation owed its safety to their arms; and, probably, for the first time, they were filled with dreams of lofty ambition. During the war they had acquired an intimate acquaintance with the country; and, whether, from being pleased with it as an agreeable residence, or from a sense of the internal weakness of its

inhabitants, or both, they determined to settle on the banks of the Volkhof, the scene of their recent victories. Here, Rurik, the leader of the band, built a town called Ladoga, which he surrounded with a rampart of earth, so that he might effectually resist any attempt at invasion by a maritime force entering the river from Ladoga Lake. He also established his two brothers, Sinaus and Truvor, in similarly independent positions. These protracted movements, and deliberate arrangements roused the suspicions of the Novgorodians, who saw with serious alarm, that the body whom they had paid to protect them were now manifesting a disposition to turn the means they thus acquired against themselves. On former occasions the Novgorodians had employed these hirelings in a similar way, and they then exhibited no desire to remain in the country after their masters had discharged them; but repeated conflicts had weakened the power of the lords of the soil; their secret distresses had become known to the Varangians, and they saw, when it was too late, that confidence was not so purchaseable as protection.

To oppose force to force was the only alternative left. The first show of jealousy put the Varangians on the alert. They were desperate and fearless, more accustomed to sanguinary warfare than their opponents, and although they did not propose to themselves a higher pledge on the issue of the struggle, yet their hopes were of a more daring and inspiring cast. One of the first incidents of the desultory conflict, decided the fate of Novgorod. A brave citizen, named Vadime, who had won in the battles of his country the honourable surname of the Valiant, took his place at the head of the republicans. But the skill and determination of Vadime were of no avail; he and his party were sacrificed on the very threshold of their enterprise. This circumstance threw the Novgorodians into disorder. They wanted leaders and moral energy. They fell into despair at the approaches of Rurik and his dauntless associates. The favourable moment for pushing to its uttermost the

scheme that had been labouring in the breast of the Varangian chieftain had now arrived. He saw his opportunity, and resolving to profit by it at once, he removed from his citadel at Ladoga, and, trusting to the humiliated and disorganised condition of the Novgorodians, he marched upon their capital. The event proved that he had calculated correctly. The Novgorodians, anticipating the issue of a siege, submitted, and placed the government in the hands of Rurik. * The federative democratical republic was now changed into an absolute monarchy; and from this period, 862, the history of Russia assumes a more tangible and intelligible form.

Rurik, having thus, like his Anglo-Saxon brethren some centuries before in Britain, subdued the people who invited his aid, assumed the title of grand prince; a great stroke of policy as it regarded both his own followers and the subjugated natives, since it not only, on the one hand, affirmed his unlimited sovereignty, but, on the other, recognised the existence of other princes, subordinate to himself. This nominal distribution of power, while it really left him absolute, had the happy effect of softening in appearance the character of his rule, and reconciling the Novgorodians more speedily to the change. But the unhappiness that had prevailed in the republican government, where all were chiefs, and none possessed influence, and where democratical discord was constantly deranging into chaos the efforts of legislation, assisted in persuading the people that the new constitution might be better than the old one. Unlike the Venetians in later times, the Slavi of Novgorod did not struggle for the forms of government: they suffered themselves to pass quietly from the federative republic into the absolute monarchy, without working

* There are many contradictions amongst historians as to the manner of Rurik's assumption of supreme power, but this is the most likely and the best sustained. Tooke, in his two works on Russia, gives two totally distinct versions, and claims his reader's confidence for the authenticity of both. This is, however, but one of the many inconsistencies committed in those laborious, but extremely inaccurate, productions.

through the theories of a limited monarchy, a close aristocracy, and an oligarchy, to terminate probably in a servile shadow of delegated authority.

From this date the country under the sway of Rurik took the general name of Russia. The people who covered the soil were composed of a number of tribes, of which the Slavi were the predominant in numbers and civilisation. The Varangians, however, ascended to all the places of honour and profit, incorporated their names with the language and institutions of the Slavi, and in all political affairs preserved the ascendancy. Rurik's government was founded upon a military basis. He enlarged the boundaries of the city, and gave laws to the people. Having thus firmly established his new rights in Novgorod, he repaired to Ladoga, which he made the chief seat of the empire. According to a patrimonial constitution, which had either been laid down by himself, or had previously existed amongst his countrymen, he, as grand prince, claimed the right of granting to his two brothers separate principalities, the law being common in the grant to sons and younger brothers. This right was exercised not only during the life-time of the grand prince, but might be extended by testamentary bequests. The inferior princes thus created were bound to render homage to the grand prince, and were held as his vassals. The right to grant was accompanied by a right of resumption, and a right of removal from principality to principality; but in the event of any of these subordinate princes being left undisturbed on the death of the grand prince, the title and power became hereditary; so that in course of time these petty sovereigns became as absolute, within the limits of their own principality, as the grand prince was in the grand principality.* Under

* The concluding history of this charter, which could not be traced in the body of the text without disturbing its clearness, is curious, but such as might be expected. In the beginning of the twelfth century the princes of Vladimir revolted, and freed themselves from the nominal chain in which they were held, assuming to themselves the title of grand princes. Their example was rapidly followed, and, in little more than another century, all the separate princes created under the Tartarian khans became independent. In the fourteenth century, Simeon the Proud resisted this

these tenures, Rurik appointed his brother Sinaus to the government of Bielo-Osero, and Truvor to that of Isborsk, chief towns in dependent territories, and keys to the commercial avenues of the kingdom. They lived to wear their honours but a short time, and both dying childless, Rurik re-united their territories to his own, and returning to the ancient city of Novgorod, made it from that time forward the capital of the entire monarchy.

He had not long enjoyed the sceptre, which he appears to have worn with dignity and energy, when that branch of the Slavi that dwelt at Kief on the Dneipr, appealed to him for protection against the Khazares, and requested him to appoint a prince of his own blood to the government of their territories. Here was a fresh opportunity to extend his rule by the establishment of a new tributary dynasty. He placed his step-son Oskold at the head of a sufficient force, and despatched him on this project of rescue and conquest. Oskold succeeded, subdued the Khazares, and erected a second sovereignty at Kief, dependent on the dominion of Novgorod.

Of the kingdom thus founded under the government of Oskold, with whom was united Dir, a Scandinavian warrior, there is little known during the period of Rurik's sovereignity. There are many authorities to prove that the maritime genius of the people led them to the Bosphorus, that they threw Constantinople into alarm, but that they were repulsed, and carried back with them the first seeds of Christianity that entered Kief, which was all they acquired by their valour.* The object of that expedition was manifestly of a mercantile nature. They either vainly desired to extend their power, and with it their commerce, or to open a new market for their produce. The whole of Rurik's reign passed away in quietness; the turbulence of the

spirit of revolution, and made his sons not only vassals but subjects. From him the progress of absolute dominion went forward by degrees, until we find Ivan I. completely restoring the ancient sovereignty of Rurik, incredibly enlarged in extent, and establishing once more the unity of the empire under one acknowledged and arbitrary head.

* Constantine Porphyrgenitus, Photius.

various races who were now mingling into one people giving way before the arts of peace, and the cultivation of the means of restoring their shattered society to strength and security. After a reign of seventeen years, of singular ease and safety, considering the perils amidst which it began, Rurik died in the year 879. Igor, his only son, and the heir to the throne, was yet in his minority, and Oleg, his guardian and relative, took upon him the government of the country until the young prince attained the age when he might administer its affairs himself.

The death of Rurik produced an immediate and universal effect upon the people. The passions and hopes that had slept during his life-time now broke out afresh. The population, in whom were united the most warlike, the most wealthy, and the most commercial attributes, longed for occupation and enterprise. Nor was the republican spirit of the Novgorodians extinguished, nor the love of the sea, and daring adventures, that characterised the Varangians. These old feelings rushed back upon the tribes, and soon made themselves evident in the capital. They could not have found a more favourable instrument than Oleg. He was a man especially adapted to the age and the circumstances in which he was placed. He was intrepid, cunning, persevering, grasping, and cruel. Such a spirit, in such times, was capable of great designs. The muttered demands of the multitude were speedily answered by the plan of a campaign that promised employment and reward to the discontented; and which was not the less acceptable to their military honour because it was without a solitary pretext on the score of justice. Oleg had cast his eyes around in search of a proper theatre on which to enact the scenes of spoliation for which his subjects panted. He fixed upon Kief as the first point of action. That this scheme violated the patrimonial constitution, by infringing upon the personal rights of the subordinate princes, was an argument that presented no obstacles to Oleg. He looked beyond Kief for

higher and more ambitious spoils. The adjacent state, governed by Slavonian princes, and the Grecian empire beyond, were the ultimate objects to which he directed the wild and tumultuous hopes of his subjects. He did not, probably, contemplate so gigantic an undertaking as the complete subjugation of Greece, but he entertained a vague expectation of deriving some acquisitions from the attempt. He collected a numerous army, composed of fragments of tribes, different in language, costume, and habits, but all sharing alike in the prospect of pillage. With these he set out on his campaign, carrying with him the young Igor, whose presence he anticipated might be useful, on occasions, to stimulate or repress the boldness of the soldiery, or the allegiance of the nations through which he proposed to pass. On his way to Kief he took Smolensk, the capital of the Krivitches, and swept like a torrent through the many small towns that in that early age marked the beginnings of population in those regions.

As he approached Kief, he resolved upon an artifice by which the lives of his followers might be spared, and which would enable him, before he risked the issue in arms, to ascertain the strength of the city. Disguising himself as a merchant of Novgorod, travelling upon commercial business to Constantinople, and taking with him a few of his people, while he left the rest disposed privately in boats on the river, he despatched a messenger to the two princes, to request their permission to pass through their territory into Greece, and, pretending indisposition as an apology for not waiting on them in person, he begged they would come and honour him with an interview. Oskhold and Dir, unsuspicious of the fraud, and desirous of showing respect to a merchant of Novgorod, came to the river side, with but a few immediate attendants. On the instant they appeared, the soldiers of Oleg leaped from their barks, and the traitor, raising the young Igor in his arms, exclaimed, "You are neither princes, nor sprung from princes; but, behold here is the son of Rurik!" This was the signal. The ferocious soldiers rushed on the

defenceless princes, and murdered them on the spot. In the exultation of the deed, Oleg cried aloud, "Let Kief be the mother of all the Russian cities;" — and he kept his pledge.

The gates of the city were thrown open to the regent, and he took peaceable possession of his new state. In order to fix his rule more firmly, and principally because he desired to be near Greece, with the hope of the conquest of which he always inspired his people, he removed the seat of his united dominion to Kief. In the immediate vicinity he founded new cities, exacted tributes from the surrounding principalities, and subdued or won over all the Slavonian, Finnish, and Lithuanian tribes, that were either independent of authority, or under subjection to the feeble khans of the eastern khozars. He carried himself with considerable address in the management of these extraordinary conquests, by which such a multitude of strangers in race and tongue became blended under the one head. Within the sphere of the royal residence, where, of course, he desired to become popular, he relaxed the severity of his laws and reduced the amount of tribute-money. He tolerated, too, in Kief, the infant spirit of Christianity, which, above all other acts, exhibits the subtlety and prudence of his character.

Having now enlarged one empire by the subjugation of another, and completely laid the foundations of a third in the union of both, he applied himself to his long-cherished project, the invasion of Constantinople. The vanquished tribes were accessible to one temptation in common. However they differed in other respects, they were all equally inspired by the example of ferocious valour and the thirst of gain. They eagerly embraced the opportunity for seeking new adventures under so bold a chief. He had breathed his own ungovernable passion for enterprise into them; and they, reckless and desperate by nature, kindled at the flattering prospects he opened to them. He placed Igor at the head of affairs at Kief, and, with an army of 80,000 men, he embarked on board 2000 vessels.

his army drunk with horrible excitement. The passage of the cataracts of the Borysthenes, which, rising over seven rocks, impede the navigation of the river for a space of fifteen leagues, was made with incredible toil, and surprising success. As they approached the cataracts, they were obliged to unload their vessels, and by manual strength drag them over the rocks; their baggage and amunition was conveyed in the same way, but not without the utmost risk of life. Nor was their dangerous voyage exposed merely to the perils of the stream. The banks were peopled by hostile tribes, who had many an old quarrel to revenge; so that under the eyes of their enemies at each side, they prosecuted their laborious undertaking. This peril was increased as the river contracted below the cataracts: but they passed on in safety to the mouth of the Borysthenes, and, after resting at an island to repair their vessels, they consigned themselves to the waters of the Euxine, and in a short time lay before the walls of Constantinople.

Leo, the philosopher, was then the reigning sovereign of Constantinople. The news of the projected invasion had already reached him, and as an effectual safeguard against the barbarians, he directed a heavy chain of iron to be slung across the harbour, so that no vessels could get within its basin. But, according to the old chronicle, the Russians were not to be so easily diverted from their purpose. Oleg, finding that his passage was thus unexpectedly arrested, ordered his two thousand barks to be drawn on shore. He then placed them on wheels, affixed below their keels, which were flat, and by the aid of their flowing sails, actually navigated the track by land to the gates of Byzantium.* His progress was marked with horrors. The country was devastated, and the inhabitants and their habitations destroyed. The details of these atrocities are too disgusting for repetition. The worst excesses which unbridled licentiousness could invent, or the brutal nature of primitive savages

* Whenever we find this strange circumstance alluded to, it is accompanied by exclamations of incredulity. In our day, with the railway before us, it is entitled to more confidence.

could execute, were carried into effect, on this extraordinary march, or voyage. These cruelties, however, produced the expected result. When Oleg reached Constantinople he found that the terror of his name had preceded him ; he hung his shield over the gate as a trophy, and led his warriors exultingly into the capital. According to some authorities, he was invited to a feast by Leo, with the design of taking him off by poison, in failure of which the emperor was obliged to negociate an ignominious peace. A treaty was immediately entered into, by which Leo bound himself to pay tribute to each vessel sailing under the flag of Oleg, to remit all duties upon Russian merchants trading in the Greek empire, to support such merchants for half a year, and on their depature to furnish them with ample means and necessaries to prosecute their homeward journey. This treaty was ratified with considerable ceremony, in the presence of the envoys, the illustrious boyards, and the Varangian guard ; and Oleg, laden with spoils and trophies, returned in triumph to Kief. The people, witnessing such miraculous victories, looked upon him with wonder almost amounting to reverence.

The easy acquiescence of Leo, instead of satisfying the demands of Oleg, only produced fresh desires to obtain more where so much was obtained so peaceably. After a few years had elapsed, during which time the Russians enjoyed all the advantages of the treaty, besides many contributions with which the emperor purchased the safety of certain Russian cities governed by feudatory princes, Oleg despatched a new treaty to the emperor, in which he exacted several fresh stipulations, under the pretence that he had inadvertently omitted them on the former occasion. Some of the clauses of this treaty, the whole of which is preserved by Nestor, afford curious proofs of the character of the policy pursued by the Russians at this early period, and of that adroit mixture of equity and rapacity which characterised their aggressions, and procured, through the perseverance of their rulers, the enlargement of their empire.

Thus, Oleg stipulates that if "a Russian kill a Christian, or a Christian a Russian, the assassin shall be put to death on the very spot where the crime was committed." Should the murderer escape, his legal fortune to be adjudged to the next in kin of the murdered, the wife of the murderer to receive the rest. For the offence of striking another with a sword or any other weapon, the fine of three litres of gold to be adjudged; in lack of the means of paying which, the offender to give all he could, even to his garments. A chief, Greek or Russian, caught in the fact, might be put to death with impunity. Should he be seized, the things stolen to be restored, and the criminal adjudged to pay thrice their value. The goods of a Russian dying without testament, in the dominions of the emperor, to be sent to Russia to his heirs; if bequeathed by testament, to be in like manner transmitted to the legatees.

In these conditions we recognise the first seeds of an extended code of law. Property and person were thus amply protected by penalties; the innocent were saved from the consequences of the guilt of their relatives; while the supremacy of Russia was ingeniously insinuated and established, not merely by direct imposts, but by the general tendency and spirit of her treaties, which were invariably drawn up with the balance in her favour.

By Oleg, who cemented the conquests and enlarged the dominions of Rurik, were laid the foundations of the Russian empire. It may be fairly assumed that the despotism of the throne, by suppressing the aspirations of the discontented, and binding within the same iron rule the various nations which it held under subjection, was the real source of the spreading power. The moral principles by which we measure the policy of free institutions, or governments advancing towards freedom, are utterly inapplicable to the state of society in which the Russians were placed at this era. They required indomitable leaders to give a direction to their energies; nor could that direction be of any avail if

their leaders had not secured unity of purpose and action by measures of the most absolute coercion. The difference in martial equipments and habits that prevailed between the Varangians and the Slavi, will farther account for the growth of a dominion which had never arisen into being, if the aborigines had remained masters of the soil. The Slavi, as we have seen, were indolent and migratory; falling away into wandering tribes, and every where forming themselves into scattered democracies of the loosest and most irresponsible description. Their protection in battle consisted in unwieldy wooden shields *, and their arms were chiefly clubs, as they made no use of metal in their weapons. † The Varangians, on the contrary, were bold, enterprising, and united; they were remarkably devoted to their chiefs, and so predisposed in favour of despotic authority, as frequently to sacrifice themselves on the tombs of their princes. ‡ Their arms, too, forged no doubt in the mines of Sweden, consisted of cutlasses and swords: they wore helmets, breast-plates, and vambraces; had a regular system of tactics; threw up palisades, and dug trenches round their encampments; protected themselves by chains of outposts; laid snares for their enemies; and were able to conduct sieges with regularity and precision. § These people soon either infused their own stronger principles into the subjugated multitudes, or, by domination, gave a tone to that weakness of character which had hitherto subsisted in reckless independence. Hence came the unity of the empire. The Slavi crouched to a power that gave them a wider domain for the gratification of their roving propensities; and, by degrees, as that power gave them laws to preserve their acquisitions, they conformed to the tyranny that made them sharers in glories they could not have won for themselves.

* Malte-Brun. † Ammianus, Pausanias, Gibbon.

‡ Yakut, Achmet. Somonosof states, quoting earlier writers, that one of the princes demanded absolute power, that his people freely accorded it, and that he instantly joined it to the priesthood.

§ Karamsin.

Although Oleg was but the guardian of Igor, the hereditary heir, he governed in his own person for thirty-three years, nor did Igor succeed to the throne until after his death, which happened in 913. The unformed state of the laws gave a license to this usurpation, which was still farther borne out by the tacit consent of the nation, in whose fears Oleg had long established his authority.

The account of the manner of Oleg's death, as it is related in the ancient chronicle of Nestor, is curious, but, we need hardly premise, not to be relied upon. It appears that he had a particular horse to which he was much attached, but which he had ceased to use, as the diviners had foretold it would be the cause of his death. After having forgotten it for five years, he happened to be reminded of the prediction, and inquiring for the horse, was informed that it was dead. In some exultation at the exposure of the imposition, he desired to be conducted to the dead body; when, placing his foot on its skull, he exclaimed, "So, this is my dreaded enemy!" The words were scarcely spoken, when a serpent that had lain concealed in the cavities of the head darted out, and inflicted a mortal wound in the heel of the valiant monarch, thus fulfilling, according to tradition, the very letter of the prophecy.

Igor I. ascended the throne at the age of forty. During the reign of the regent he had married Olga, a Slavonian lady of great beauty; a union intended to promote the gradual admixture of the two races. His accession was the signal of fresh disasters. The nations that had been subdued by Oleg displayed symptoms of insubordination, and even resisted the payment of the tributes. But the son of Rurik, and pupil of Oleg, was determined that the opening of his reign at least should be distinguished by auspicious violence. He crushed the Drevlians on the first motions of their revolt, and increased the amount of their tribute. The Uglitches, who occupied the southern branch of the Dniepr, held out against him for three years, but they

were at length beaten by the gallantry of the voyvode, Sventilde, to whom the command of the army had been confided by Igor, and who was afterwards rewarded by the full amount of the tribute — a marten skin blackened by fire. Igor's conquests, however, were insignificant: they produced no golden fruits. To reduce tributary nations, composed of poor tribes living by cattle and agriculture, or to compromise an inglorious peace with obscure foes, as he did with the Petchenegans, who started up from their lairs on the Yaik and the Volga to make a deliberate descent upon Russia, were not deeds to ingratiate the monarch in the eyes of his subjects, now grown accustomed to conquests almost superhuman. Igor felt, or was reminded of, the necessity of extending his rule, and seeking distant scenes for the employment of the military genius of the country; and, in an unfortunate agony of imitation, he resolved to carry arms into Greece in the track of his victorious predecessor.

This was a war destitute of all pretence. Its naked object was spoliation. Ten thousand barks are stated to have been launched for the purpose of transporting an army, which, by arithmetical hyperbole, was calculated at 400,000 strong; a force that appears, under all circumstances, incredible. In the year 941, having been twenty-eight years wasting his strength with domestic foes, Igor I. set sail for Constantinople. With a wanton ferocity, surpassing even the impiety of Oleg, he ravaged the frontier towns, and those districts that lay at a distance from the capital, where the troops of the empire were concentrated. The people fled, or perished before him: they were utterly defenceless; and his headlong fury gathered a fresh stimulus from the facility with which the work of destruction was carried on. He crucified, or impaled, or buried alive, burned, hung, or tortured the wretched Greeks, to make savage merriment for his brutal soldiery. He improved upon the cruelties amidst which his youth had been nursed; but he wanted the nerve and cunning of his

preceptor to profit by them. On this iniquitous journey he is described to have made the priests especial objects of his insatiate thirst after blood, by driving long nails into their heads, and hunting them before him with their hands tied behind their backs.

These frightful excesses went not without their full measure of reparation. The Greeks, who received the news of the devastations before the invader had made good his march on Byzantium, resolved, with that desperation which incites men in the last struggle for life, that the horrors of the carnage should be repaid in kind. They assembled their armies in all parts of the kingdom; and, taking for the centre of their operations, the point where the Russian troops rested, they poured down in tumultuous tides from every quarter, and effectually inclosed the barbarians within an armed circle. The massacre that followed was considerable; and it was only after the loss of great numbers that Igor ultimately cut his way to his ships. On the shore, however, revenge in another form awaited them. The patrician Theophanes, who commanded the Grecian fleet, met them at the beach, and flinging amongst them at intervals that dangerous combustible preparation known by the name of Grecian fire *, threw their ranks into utter dismay. The Russians, being ignorant of the nature of this unquenchable body of flame, which had the property of living in the water, and of consuming every thing that lay in the neighbourhood of its passage, were struck with such sudden alarm, that they fled from its fury in confusion and disorder, some plunging into the sea to avoid it, others falling prostrate on the earth, and not a few running wildly for refuge into the arms of the enemy. Those that sought safety in the

* The art of making this instrument of destruction is lost The Congreve rocket approaches nearest to it. Water, instead of extinguishing it, is said to have given it fresh strength. Vinegar, sand, oil, and wine were the only agents that could resist it. It was thrown in glass or earthen vessels, and in that respect bore some resemblance to the modern shell. Its motion, however, was different from that of all other artificial fire, as it always followed the direction in which it was propelled. We have no need to regret its extinction. The science of murder on a large scale is sufficiently injurious and elaborate without its assistance.

water, found that the raging fire pursued them through the waves; and those that succeeded in swimming to the vessels, discovered that the flames had been before them, and that the timbers of the greater part of the fleet either floated dissevered and shattered on the surface, or were precipitated to the bottom.

The remnant which survived fled along the coast of Bithynia; but here, again, they were intercepted by a select army under the command of the patrician Phocas, who, after routing and dispersing them, made prisoners of several of the flying platoons. Some who were fortunate enough to escape from these continued disasters retired again upon their ships, and, under favour of the night, contrived to elude the vigilance of the Greeks, and embark. Theophanes, however, soon made sail after them, and succeeded in sinking several of the remaining barks; a few, containing Igor,—and, according even to the Russian historians, whose account must be received with some allowance for national exaggeration, — scarcely a third of his formidable army escaping to make a miserable passage home.

This discomfiture might be supposed to have taught a forcible lesson to the incompetent Igor; but that strange mixture of weakness and daring which formed his character, urged him to a renewal of the wild attempt, after some years of internal sloth had again rendered his people weary of peace. He took the Petchenegans, his voluntary enemies, into pay, and collecting a numerous army, once more set forth for Greece in the year 944. He was met on the threshold by Promanus, the usurper, who having obtained the throne of Constantine Porphyrgenitus, then a minor, by acts of intrigue and perfidy, was not reluctant to palter for safety on the borders of the empire. He offered, before a sword was drawn, to revive the treaty enforced by Oleg, and to pay to Igor the tribute it established. A recollection of former disgraces made Igor, privately, not unwilling to close with this proposition, although he is described to have hesitated at first, as if he desired to

assume the air of one who could dictate his own terms. The arguments used by his advisers were cogent enough, and afford decisive proofs of the purport of the reasoning by which his affected scruples were overcome. They said that it was better to get gold and silver, and precious stuffs, without fighting, as the issue of battle was uncertain. When barbarians condescend to become rational and cautious, we may justly suspect that there are unacknowledged fears at bottom. The attempt upon Greece was, therefore, abandoned for the resumption of the old bribe; and, as a bonus for the disappointment, Igor gave the Petchenegans leave to go at large into Bulgaria, and satisfy their appetite for plunder. He carried the remainder of his troops into the country of the Drevlians, a people who had already been vexatiously subjected to an increased tribute; and there, through the awe of a reputation patched up by the recent voluntary submission of the Greeks, he enforced a still heavier burthen of taxation. Enriched with these easily won spoils, he returned to Kief.

But he was still dissatisfied. Like a man who, once dishonoured, is always seeking fresh quarrels to repair his tarnished fame, the uneasy Igor framed a new pretext to return to the petty warfare against this oppressed and patient tribe. He paid off the greater part of his army with the spoils already accumulated, and, at the head of the meagre residue, again advanced upon the Drevlians. They received him at first in a spirit of submission. He demanded double tribute; they paid it. Mortified at their quiet acquiescence, which deprived him of any decent excuse for shedding their blood, he now insisted upon raising the charge threefold. Anticipating that this exorbitant levy might be resisted, he penetrated into the heart of the country, with the design of enforcing his purpose; but he miscalculated the endurance of the population. He had pulled the cord too tightly. Human sufferance could bear no more. The people, forced into desperation by these repeated wrongs, waited a favourable opportunity; and springing upon the

unhappy tyrant from an ambuscade, murdered him upon the spot. "He is a wolf," was their cry of revenge; "he has stolen our sheep one by one, and would now openly rob us of our entire flock: he must be struck dead." His assassination took place in the year 945, in the neighbourhood of a town called Korosten, on the river Uscha, where he was buried, and where a high mound of earth was afterwards raised to his memory.

The close of this reign terminates an epoch in Russian history. That which succeeds introduces a new and important feature.

CHAP. III.

OLGA, THE WIDOW OF IGOR, REIGNS IN THE NAME OF HER SON. — THE DEATH OF IGOR REVENGED. — THE DREVLIAN TERRITORY ANNEXED TO RUSSIA. — OLGA EMBRACES THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. — SHE ABDICATES IN FAVOUR OF HER SON. — SVIATOZLAF I. ADOPTS THE ROVING LIFE OF THE KALMUKS. — THE DESTRUCTION OF THE KOZARES. — EXPLOITS IN BULGARIA. — RESCUE OF KIEF. — DEATH OF THE PRINCESS OLGA. — HER CHARACTER. — SVIATOZLAF PARTITIONS THE EMPIRE AMONGST HIS SONS, AND RETIRES TO BULGARIA. — WAR WITH JOHN ZIMISCES. — SVIATOZLAF'S DEATH. — THE STATE OF THE EMPIRE. — RETROSPECT.

On the death of Igor, his widow, Olga, assumed the reins of government in the name of her infant son, Sviatozlaf, calling in to her councils the valiant Sventilde, who had distinguished himself in the early wars of the preceding reign. This princess, who was a woman of extraordinary powers of mind, and possessed of a most persevering spirit, conceived, as the first exercise of her prerogative, the design of revenging upon the Drevlians the death of her husband. The manner in which this project was carried into execution will exhibit her character more truly than the most laboured commentary.

The Drevlians were the last of the Slavonian nations that abandoned the habits of the nomadic state. Their name, derived from a word which signifies tree or wood, is descriptive of a people chiefly residing in forests. They were now, however, formed into regular communities: they lived in towns, and cultivated the soil; were governed by a despotic prince; and, although, agreeably to the existing usage, by which the weaker power paid tribute to the stronger, they were compelled to render homage to Russia, yet they were, in all other respects, independent of external sway. When the murder of Igor relieved them from the oppressions of their

formidable neighbour, their prince, Male, believing it to be a fortunate opportunity for cementing an union with a country that his people had so much reason to fear, sent ambassadors to Olga to make that princess an offer of his hand in marriage. The deputation was received with marked politeness; but, pretending to desire some further elucidation on the subject, Olga required that a second embassy should appear at her court. The second was still more numerous and costly than the first, and the members of both now awaited her decision. When she had secured them, she immediately ordered them to be put to death; and before the news of this treachery could by possibility be transmitted to Male, she set out in person, at the head of a powerful retinue, for the country of the Drevlians. She still preserved the semblance of gentle compliance, and, under the mask of this placidity, gave a solemn entertainment, to which she invited the prince and the chief families of the nobility. In the midst of the feast they were all assassinated. Her army were now let loose upon the country: they pillaged and destroyed every place through which they passed. Korosten, the scene of Igor's death, especially suffered at the hands of the vindictive soldiery; but the people of this town, terrified at the deeds of cruelty practised by Olga, held out against the beleaguers for a considerable time. She at last subdued them by an artifice. Finding that there was but a slight hope of conquering them, except by a protracted siege, she promised them a complete act of indemnity if they sent to her all the pigeons that could be found within the walls of the town. The people very readily agreed to so moderate a demand; but no sooner did Olga receive the pigeons, than she caused lighted matches to be attached to their tails, and then gave them their liberty. The birds instinctively returned to their accustomed haunts, and, being scared by the brands that tracked their passage through the air, flew from house to house until they set the town on fire. Terror seized upon the inhabitants, who now rushed wildly out, and were put to

the sword by the insidious enemy that lay in wait under the walls for the anticipated catastrophe. The whole of the country of the Drevlians was subjugated during this incursion, and immediately annexed to the Russian territories, or rather incorporated with them.

Having accomplished these perfidious cruelties upon her unhappy foes, Olga next turned her attention to the cultivation of Christianity, which was then making way through the barbarous idolatries of the heathens. The transition was abrupt, but not unnatural. Her character was a compound of extremes. Enthusiasm was spread like a livid fire over her mind, and whatever disposition arose to the surface received the tinge of its fierceness. Perhaps that very fanaticism of mind which produced such enormous crimes in satisfaction of a pious revenge, led her by a somewhat similar impulse to indulge in the consolations of religion. She was at all events in a condition to feel its influence; her reflections were embittered by private sorrows, which neither the glory of conquests, nor the sacrificial blood of her enemies could appease; and the energy of her passions, which were violent and impetuous, gave to all her thoughts an expression of extremity that could be subdued only by the calm philosophy of the Christian faith. Certain it is, however, that she was the first Russian monarch who embraced Christianity; and that she is distinguished in the annals of the country, and the archives of the Russo-Greek church, as saint Olga. Neither her implacable nature, nor her guilt, presented any obstacle to her canonization. It is not unlikely that the Christians were so well pleased to win over a royal convert, that they did not scruple to purchase her at so large a price.

The Christian religion had been previously received and followed by some of the inhabitants of Kief, where it was tolerated, but not encouraged. But Olga, not satisfied with the knowledge of its Russian professors, made a journey to Constantinople in order to obtain more ample instructions, and submit to the baptismal

ceremony. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the historian, then filled the imperial throne. He received his visitor with the respect due to her rank, and that admiration which it is admitted on all hands her royal bearing and personal charms were calculated to command. When she came to receive the first rite of the church, the emperor himself stood sponsor. She was introduced into the Christian communion under the name of Helen. Throughout her visit to the capital of the Grecian empire, she was treated with great ceremony; and, on her departure, Constantine presented her with numerous valuable gifts, such as vases and beautiful stuffs, the latter of which could be procured only in the east. She, on her part, in return for these favours, promised to send him furs, wax, and troops; the former commodities being in great request at Constantinople, and the Russian soldiers being held in consideration in the armies of Greece, where many were at that period embodied. When the emperor afterwards found it necessary to remind her of her engagement, she is said to have dismissed his commissioners with fair words and some courtly jokes; so that her Christian title and her imperial curiosities were purchased at the small expense of a broken promise.

The religious example of Olga utterly failed to produce a corresponding sentiment in the minds of her subjects. Her doctrines of profession were probably neutralised by her practice. It cannot be denied, however, that although she was of a masculine temperament and cruel disposition, she contributed largely to the extension of the rude arts and the happiness of her people. Her son, who was unmoved by the Christian creed, was equally stubborn to the lessons of sovereignty his mother sedulously laboured to implant in his mind. That she understood the science of government may be inferred from the fact that she made a tour of the empire, and in her progress ordered bridges to be built and roads to be constructed for the purposes of commerce, and to facilitate internal communication; and

that she founded many towns and villages, and endowed several institutions, which in that bargarous age might be called the creations of a high intellect looking beyond its own time into the growing wants of a rapidly spreading population. Her son witnessed these active employments, to which she referred as practical illustrations of her theories of legislation; but he profited nothing by their wisdom.

The attempt to establish Christianity in a country enslaved by barbarous customs, and which had not yet settled down into permanent order, was, as might have been expected, a task of great difficulty. It is to be remarked, however, in vindication of the people, that they made no attempt to resist it by persecution in any shape; and to that fact may be attributed the tardiness of its progress. Had they made martyrs of the converted, the faith would have quickly taken root in the sympathies and superstition of the multitude. They used the more effective weapon, ridicule, which deterred unbelievers from examination, and forced their Christian fellow-subjects to abstain from display. Olga is said to have founded churches, and to have encouraged the the residence of priests in her capital. Her zeal was of no avail; the cold reception of her new-born piety was probably the cause of her next act, neither the date nor motive of which is any where recorded by her historians. That act was her abdication of the throne in favour of her son, which took place about the period when she embraced Christianity. The esteem in which Sviatozlaf was held, who was a firm believer in the pagan creed, an abominator of the new religion, which he thought calculated to make men cowards, and a barbarian in manners, strengthens the inference that the Russians were not yet prepared for the reception of the principles of civilisation.

Sviatozlaf I. revived the habits of the piratical Varangians and the unsettled Slavi. He united in his own nature the barbarous qualities of both. Civil jurisprudence, the introduction of improvements, the

conservation of social order, the protection of trade and commerce, were subjects which he treated with contempt. War, rapine, and desultory conquests formed the whole objects of his ambition. The advances towards internal stability that had been made by his mother were no further aided by him; and all that can be said in his favour is, that he deserved the negative praise of not having interfered to retard those advantages which his uncultivated nature taught him to despise.

The moment the government of Russia devolved upon him, he gave loose to those wild dispositions that were pent up during the reign of his mother. He selected an army composed of the most savage of his troops that could be collected over the face of the empire; and abandoning the palace at Kief, in which his spirit felt itself confined, he dismissed his personal retinue, and, followed by his soldiers, established himself upon a plain in the open air. It was his taste to adopt the mode of life pursued by the roving Kalmuks. He cut up his meat with his own sword, broiled it on the naked fire, and ate his dinner in common with his guards. He used no vessels for culinary purposes. With the splendour of state he relinquished also its comforts. His pillow was a saddle, his bed the earth, his curtains the sky, and his covering perhaps a saddle-cloth or a cloak. He abolished all distinctions of convenience, and shared the general hardships. Unencumbered by a camp equipage, he could traverse with ease the distant lands into which his love of enterprise might carry him; and to improve still farther this facility in the art of excursive warfare, he accustomed himself and his troops to feed on the flesh of horses; so that wherever they penetrated they took with them in the agents of their speed the means of their subsistence. A leader so indifferent to his own wants, and so prompt to share in all the difficulties and dangers to which his men were exposed, could not fail to become popular. We consequently find that the army of Svia-

tozlaf was as enthusiastic in its attachment to his person and government, as it was hardy and ferocious.

All that Sviatozlaf required was an enemy to fight against. The cause of battle, of course, occupied none of his attention. Having roved for some time restlessly over vast tracts, where there were no foes to encounter, he turned his arms at length against the Kozans *, a people who had formerly poured down upon the eastern shore of the Euxine, and subsequently subdued the nations dwelling in the south of Russia. A Slavonian tribe, the Viatitches, were under tribute to the Kozans; and Sviatozlaf, looking with jealousy to a power that had pushed its authority so far as the Oka and Volga, on the banks of which rivers the Viatitches were settled, proceeded at once to bring the question to issue. The Kozans were speedily annihilated by the grand prince in a pitched battle, about the year 966.† He took their capital city by storm; and, from that date forward, the name of the Kozans disappears from the page of history.

Scarcely was this exploit completed when Nicephorus Phocas, the successor of Romanus II., invited the aid, or rather purchased by subsidies the succour of Sviatozlaf against the Bulgarians, who were secretly assisting the Ungrians in an invasion of the imperial territories. This opened a new scene of enterprise to the daring Russian, who embraced it with avidity. He entered Bulgaria at the head of his army; seized upon all the principal towns that stretched along the borders of the Danube; and conceiving the fancy of establishing a new empire, or of attaching these suddenly acquired possessions to the old, he prepared to fix himself in the city of Yamboly ‡, as a proper site for the centre of his future operations.

His speculations, however, were interrupted almost at the moment of their formation by alarming news from Kief, where his mother, the princess Olga, and

* In the Persian, *robbers*. † Byz. Hist.
‡ Then called Pereiaslavetz.

his sons lay, surrounded by the most imminent dangers. The Petchenegans, who never lost sight of the ancient animosity, and who were always ready to wreak their vengeance upon the Russians whenever an opportunity presented itself, took advantage of the occasion of his absence, when the capital was but feebly garrisoned, and, after desolating the whole country as they advanced, appeared before the walls of Kief in great numbers. The troops within, although not numerous, might have withstood for a considerable time the assaults of the besiegers, and wearied their patience, or exhausted their strength, the town being very strongly built, and enclosed by the old fortifications and ditches of Rurik, which had been much improved by his successors; but the position of the place precluded the means of obtaining the supply of provisions necessary to sustain such a protracted resistance. The choice was between famine and the swords of the insolent invaders. In this dilemma, while the besieged lingered in their streets in a state of irresolution, an unexpected relief saved the capital of Russia from the first foe that had hazarded the experiment of placing it under siege. Prititch, a Russian general, who had come up shortly after the Petchenegans, was now pausing with his troops at the opposite bank of the river, intimidated by the superior force of the enemy, and fearful of risking a greater evil by an incautious attempt at rescue. At last, however, seeing the desperate situation of the besieged, he determined that, as affairs could hardly be in a worse condition, and as the grand-prince would hold him responsible for his conduct, to make one fearless effort to save the town. He accordingly embarked at day-break, and instructing his soldiers to blow their trumpets and raise their voices in tumultuous shouts, he was soon answered from the walls of the city by military instruments and a din of welcome. This stratagem had the desired effect. The Petchenegans were filled with terror. The approaching assistance was soon exaggerated by their imaginations; and they were so taken by surprise, as to believe that the

roar of the trumpets and the shouts of the despairing garrison could proceed only from the victorious army of Sviatozlaf, returning from fields of fresh conquest, crowned with glory and animated by revenge. Without waiting to satisfy themselves any farther they fled in dismay. Prititch, having thus saved the capital, released the princess-mother, and the sons of the grand-prince, from the jeopardy which they had begun to fear would have terminated in their death.

A parley followed this bloodless triumph, at the request of the prince of the Petchenegans. The two leaders met and exchanged courtesies, making, at the same time, mutual pledges of good-will. The Russian general presented the prince with a cuirass, a buckler, and a sword; and received on his own part a horse, a sabre, and a bundle of arrows. This circumstance, trifling in itself, is a saving grace in the record of barbarous actions: it relieves the monotony of reiterated rapine, and slaughter, and perfidy, where each succeeding occurrence is but a repeated impression minted off from the same die, in the production of which some accident operates to break the actual uniformity.

Sviatozlaf, on receipt of the intelligence that informed him of the peril of his capital, lost no time in returning. He arrived before the Petchenegans had made good their retreat, and following them, he routed their forces; and then, satisfied with punishing their presumption, he condescended to dismiss them on terms of peace.

The princess Olga, who was now at an advanced age, dissuaded him from prosecuting his scheme for the formation of a new empire, at least while she lived. But her influence and her remonstrance spread over but a narrow compass of time. She was soon gathered to the church she had the hardihood to enter amidst a nation of unbelievers. In her life she had done much evil mixed with good. Her example was inefficient, because, for all practical reference, it was inconsistent and unsatisfactory. The web of benefits she wove in the light

of her wisdom, which was eminent, was torn in the darkness of her passions and fanaticism, which were overwhelming. Her power was great, so long as it was based upon a superstitious despotism; when she attempted to erect it upon milder precepts, without at the same time mitigating its arrogance, she was forced to surrender it into baser but more congenial hands. Her character was formed in rude and savage times, but it yearned towards better hopes. There was no age to which it was truly adapted. It was that of a mingled genius, and was equally spoiled by first impressions and the deeper but fewer traces of later knowledge. But her reign was of vast importance to the ulterior destinies of the empire. It laid in the earth the primal seed of civilisation. It bequeathed a precedent to posterity, which, when the time of accomplishment arrived, was not without its value. This was the reason why the Russian church immortalised her amongst its saints; although it must be confessed that the whole tenor of her career, whether as a pagan or a christian, would seem to have justified an immortality of another kind.

Freed from the burthen of his aged mother, Sviatozlaf entered upon immediate arrangements to return to his new empire on the Danube. The partition he made of his Russian possessions was one of those mistakes that could be committed only by a prince enthusiastic in the prosecution of novelties, and ignorant of human nature. Retaining in his own person the nominal sovereignty, he divided Russia between his three sons. Yarapolk was installed in the government of Kief; Oleg in that of the country of the Drevlians; and Vladimir, his natural son by Malucha, the housekeeper of the princess Olga, in the ancient throne of Novgorod. This dangerous disposition of the empire proved, at a subsequent period, almost fatal to its existence, leading to disastrous dissensions that nearly destroyed its integrity: but the worst effect it produced was the principle it enforced, of the right of the grand-prince to partition the states, and regulate, as he thought fit, the order of succession. We

have already seen, in the few reigns through which we have passed, that this disorder prevailed to an extraordinary extent; Oleg keeping until his death the throne on which he sat but as agent for the minority of Igor, and the princess Olga retaining a sovereign power in the same way long after the majority of Sviatczlaf. These instances were long subsequently held up in justification of similar acts of violence; and the assertion of the same despotic prerogative runs, in a more or less modified form, throughout the whole of the Russian annals.

The Bulgarians, who, on the precipitate return of Sviatozlaf to Kief, were entirely abandoned by the Russian army, which accompanied its leader home, might, at this period, be considered as a nation rapidly rising into commercial importance. They traded extensively with Persia, India, Greece, France, and Italy, and through Russia, with the countries that lay to the north. They stood between the commerce of Europe and Asia, and mingled largely in both. The cupidity of Sviatozlaf was excited by these advantages; and without the genius to improve, or even preserve them, he determined to hazard another attempt, more daring than the former, upon the liberties of the people. The mode of making war, and deserting, on an emergency, the newly acquired territory, which characterized that age, is not susceptible of a very clear explanation. We cannot well understand how a whole country could be left to chance immediately after its subjugation; nor why, instead of establishing his authority in the first instance, the conqueror should, to meet insurrection at home, suddenly withdraw his whole forces, and refer to a future opportunity, not the settlement of the conquered kingdom, but the toils and expense of a second conquest. Yet such was the case in this instance; and Sviatozlaf, having delegated to his sons the whole of the internal administration of Russia, commenced his march at the head of a numerous army, to regain his capital on the Danube. From the first disaster that befel his army

sprung their final success. Having advanced upon the city of Yamboly, they were repulsed with extraordinary bravery by the Bulgarians. Dismay and confusion pervaded their ranks. In this extremity they grew desperate, and seeing no chance of escape from the fury of their opponents, they resolved that their fall should be surrounded by glory. It was now the turn of the Bulgarians to take alarm. The ferocity of the Russians filled them with awe and terror. The struggle was not long continued, and the Russians obtained an easy surrender of the town. Sviatozlaf was again the master of Bulgaria, and once more spread devastation throughout the country.

Fresh reverses, however, awaited Bulgaria. Nicephorus, who had originally engaged Sviatozlaf in the descent upon that kingdom, had been in the intermediate time assassinated by John Zimisces, who succeeded him on the throne of the Grecian empire. Zimisces, discovering that a pledge had been given to his predecessor by the Russian prince, to the effect that neither he nor his army should occupy the vanquished territory, sent an ambassador to Sviatozlaf requiring the fulfilment of the treaty, and demanding the immediate evacuation of Bulgaria. To this ambassador, however, Sviatozlaf, actuated by a double motive, refused to give audience. The consequence was instant preparations for war on both sides.

Sviatozlaf was moved to this policy by the dictates of an ambition, purchasing its objects at the expense of honour, and partly by the intrigues of a patrician, named Kalocer, in the imperial court. Kalocer aspired to the throne of Greece himself, and, hoping to secure the aid of the Russians, he dexterously promoted their views respecting Bulgaria, which he thought would be a cheap sacrifice for the accomplishment of his ulterior purpose.* Nor was Sviatozlaf wholly unconcerned in the success of the secret machinations of Kalocer. Their interests were mutually involved in the trea-

* Script. Hist. Byz.

chery. As the Grecian desired to propitiate the valuable alliance of the Russians, so it was important to Sviatozlaf to place upon the imperial throne an emperor of his own choosing.

Zimisces made great preparations for the approaching campaign, but Sviatozlaf was beforehand with him. He assembled his army, to the number, it is said, of 300 000, and advancing into Thrace, committed the most barbarous excesses. But he was defeated before Adrianople by a stratagem, and was obliged to retire upon Yamboly, where, in the course of the following year, he was besieged by John Zimisces in person. The assault was rapid and complete; and the city was taken by the Greeks. Eight thousand of the Russians shut themselves up in the citadel, but Zimisces, setting fire to it, speedily destroyed them.

Yamboly being thus wrested from his hands, and the remainder of the cities on the Danube gradually yielding, Sviatozlaf kept the field with a handful of troops, pursuing his predatory courses in a spirit of the most desperate valour. He preserved his ascendency over his little army by the exercise of the most monstrous cruelty. Three hundred of his Bulgarian followers having excited his suspicions, were immediately put to death. By promises of future aggrandisement, and acts of present oppression, he kept the residue of his forces together. They were equally bribed by their mercenary passions and their fears.

Durostole, the last city, and the most considerable on the route of the Danube, at length received the wanderer, before the emperor had time to reach its walls. The Russians, having ventured a battle on the plain, were repulsed with serious loss, beaten back into the city, and finally blockaded on all sides, so that the supply of provisions was entirely cut off. The situation of the garrison became daily more desperate, but their bravery never slackened. They frequently rushed out upon their besiegers, and exhibited extraordinary valour in many attempts to force a passage for escape. But in these skirmishes they always suffered

materially, and on one occasion the prince himself was nearly captured. In vain, however, did his counsellors point out the terrors of their situation, and recommend a capitulation as the only resource that remained. Sviatozlaf was inexorable. His undaunted spirit never quailed, although hope had now deserted his soldiery. Relying upon their courage to meet death in preference to captivity or submission, he placed himself at their head, and made a last sortie upon the Greeks, ordering the gates of the city to be closed the moment the troops had cleared the town, so that their despair might be wound to its highest pitch, and that no alternative might lie open to them but death or victory. This gallant and daring act terminated in the signal defeat of the Russians. The battle was short, obstinate, and sanguinary; and Sviatozlaf, struggling in the toils, was reduced to the humiliation of begging a peace, which but the day before he might have obtained on honourable terms. The Greeks ascribed their victory to a miracle, for no other reason, it is presumed, than because it was important in its results, and not because it was at any moment doubtful or difficult. On the other hand, the Russian annalists foolishly pretend, that it was no victory at all, but rather that the cessation of hostilities was mutual, and that the peace was a reciprocal accommodation. The truth seems to be that Sviatozlaf was disgracefully beaten. The miserable close of his career affords abundant proof that his retreat from Bulgaria was naked, helpless, and humiliating to the last degree.

Having bound himself by the most sacred oaths to observe the treaty as it was dictated by Zimisces, the unfortunate Sviatozlaf, poorly attended, once more took the road towards Russia, which but some few months before was covered by his exulting army. He was now enduring the final punishment of his numerous

* Nestor and the Byzantine historians are at issue upon the facts; but neither can be implicitly credited, nor is the examination of the probable truth worthy of much expense of space or time.

perfidies. But even now his turbulent and despotic disposition was destined to carry him into circumstances of greater misfortune. Contrary to the entreaties and advice of those by whom he was surrounded, he embarked on the Borysthenes, the shores of which were studded with his ancient foes. The Petchenegans, who had obtained information of his progress, assembled in great numbers near the rocks of the cataracts, and awaited his approach. It was near the close of autumn when he arrived at that dangerous pass, and being unable to make the passage until spring, he was obliged to remain there for the winter, subjected to the horrors of famine. In the spring, weakened by privations, and urged by despair, he threw himself upon the Petchenegans. In the attempt to open a passage for his soldiers, he was cut down and killed on the spot. The prince of the Petchenegans turned his skull into a goblet, and encircling it with gold, had it inscribed with words to this effect: — "In the attempt to seize the property of others, thou didst lose thine own."

With the death of this barbarian terminates a distinct epoch in Russian history. The partition of the empire amongst his three sons commences a new era in the government, the form of which, however, was but short-lived, although its influence extended through some centuries, and has not even yet been entirely extinguished.

The Slavi, as we have seen, formed the original population. When the Varangians were invited into Russia, they found the people divided into small republics, independent of each other, fighting for plunder rather than power, and always exhibiting a tendency towards indolence, when circumstances favoured the love of ease. The daring genius of the pirates suggested the ambitious project of appropriating to themselves a country, of which the conquest appeared so easy, and which, for the accomplishment of all purposes of aggression and aggrandisement, required but the consolidating

vigour of a military government. The character of the Varangian governments was that of a military feudality, in which the chiefs were portioned off upon conquered provinces, subsisting upon tributes, and rendering back in return their allegiance to the grand prince. The situation of Russia offered especial advantages for the introduction of this scheme of vassalage. The dispersion of the inhabitants into separate republics, loosely organised, but completely dissociated, presented the very objects which the Varangian chief would himself have laboured to establish, with a view to the reward of distinguished and perhaps dissatisfied leaders, or the settlement of the members of his own family. It was in the spirit of this policy that Rurik bestowed two tributary governments upon his brothers; that Igor presented to his general, Sventilde, the full amount of the tribute which he had forced from the Uglitches; and that Sviatozlaf partitioned the empire between his three sons; with this difference, however, that in the latter case the delegation left each government independent upon the death of the grand prince.

This distributive principle was unavoidably kept in active exercise amongst a race of men who were constantly employed in the pursuit of booty. It had a progressive tendency towards the enlargement and aggrandisement of the empire. As new leaders started up, or fresh swarms arrived from Scandinavia, tempted by the successes of their countrymen, new necessities were created for new conquests. Where there were so many expectant chiefs, it was imperative on the grand prince to provide them with employment or to invest them in fiefs.* Thus he was incessantly kept in action, thus he was constantly extending his dominion, and thus, by the singular position in which this very exigency placed the government, it was enabled to retain in subjection a multitude of tribes to which it must

* The Russian princes, like the Germans, were obliged to supply their band, or guard, with clothing, accoutrements, horses, and provisions; and, in lack of the usual supply, the soldiery frequently forced them, as in the case of Igor, to undertake new enterprises. See *Karamsin*.

otherwise have stood opposed. As these tribes coalesced, so they came gradually to acquire an interest in common; and at length to amalgamate into one nation.

These early indications of the character of Russian policy enable us to form a more rational solution than, without their assistance, we could otherwise do, of the late problems in government that have engrossed the attention and confounded the speculations of Europe. At the period in which this portion of the history lies, the beginning of the tenth century, the Byzantine empire was rich, and surrounded by great commercial connections. She was obviously the highest mark for tribes and nations roving, like tigers, over the earth in search of spoil. Against her every javelin was directed, except where fear, or the paucity of numbers or means, arrested the savage arm. Whenever a leader could be found who was daring enough to undertake an expedition against Constantinople, his standard was certain of receiving hordes of volunteers. They rushed to serve him from all quarters. This impetuosity for plunder, united with so much personal recklessness, brought together the greatest diversity of nations that were ever found assembled in co-operation. Even the Petchenegans, who had suffered the most glaring injustice at the hands of the Russians, flocked to the army of Igor, when that imbecile prince prepared for his fatal excursion into Byzantium. The zeal against the Greeks, or—for the passion has outlived the Grecian sway—the avidity to possess their country, increased with the population of Russia, and with the wants of the soldiers. Throughout the period that began with Rurik and ended with Sviatozlaf, the disposition was constantly manifesting itself directly or indirectly,—either by positive aggression, or territorial advances towards that quarter. The talents and decision of John Zimisces drove back the obstinate Sviatozlaf to Russia; or, possibly, the drama which opened in the breach of treaty in Bulgaria, might have closed with a perfidious and sanguinary usurpation in Constantinople. This disposition, which has not re-

laxed in modern times, is the first point of moment that arises in the contemplation of the progress of this gigantic empire. It is curious to observe out of what motives it originally sprang; and still more curious to reflect by what different arguments, under a more civilised dispensation, it has been subsequently excused or defended.

In this glance at the operating causes that even thus early led to the extension of the Russian possessions, it must not be overlooked that some circumstances of signal good fortune assisted in the consolidation, step by step, of the acquired provinces. The five sovereigns, Rurik, Oleg, Igor, Olga, and Sviatozlaf reigned alone and dominant. In each of these cases there was but a single heir to the throne, so that the country was, in its infancy, auspiciously saved from the evils of partition, and enabled to accumulate strength and coherence. The only instances of delegated rule, those of the two brothers of Rurik, lapsed before the death of the sovereign; the accession was therefore regulated by an accident that confirmed the conservation and power of the state. During these reigns, the character of the sovereigns, with the exception of Igor, harmonised admirably with the demands of the time. The firmness of Rurik, the boldness of Oleg, the wild devotion of Olga, and the savage valour of Sviatozlaf, contributed severally to enlarge, to bind, and to establish the empire. Many mistakes were doubtless committed; but the science of government was then young; and better tempers, and more consistent laws, might have failed to preserve the allegiance, as they could hardly have permitted the lawlessness, of the banded savages that prowled over the face of the country. But with the partition amongst three princes of unequal capacity, came a long train of misfortunes, which we shall find alternately averted and exasperated by circumstances quite as fortuitous as those by which the first struggles of this formidable power were rendered successful. That partition, too, had its remote effect upon

the domestic policy of Russia; and the philosophical mind cannot fail to discern, in these distant events, the germs of many extraordinary principles of recent developement. Throughout the whole, the want of a clearly defined constitution is pressed upon our attention; as well as the fact that no constitution, however well defined, can work securely unless it recognise the principles of rational liberty—a truth of later discovery.

CHAP. IV.

CHARACTERS OF THE THREE PRINCES. — CIVIL DISSENSIONS. — YAROPOLK SEIZES UPON THE TERRITORIES OF HIS BROTHERS. — HIS ASSASSINATION. — THE EMPIRE RE-UNITED UNDER VLADIMIR I. — HE INSTITUTES A THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION. — ADOPTS THE GREEK RELIGION, AND ESTABLISHES IT IN RUSSIA. — MARRIES THE PRINCESS ANNE OF GREECE. — IMPROVES THE CIVIL INSTITUTIONS. — PARTITIONS THE EMPIRE. — HIS DEATH AND CHARACTER.

The union of the Slavi and the Varangians may now be considered as nearly completed. The amalgamation of the lower orders of the people had progressed with rapidity during the reign of Rurik; but although that prince, and his immediate successors, set the example of intermarriage with Slavonian families, yet the consolidation had not until now extended to the chiefs. We find that the names of Oleg's twelve envoys and of his boyards, in the treaty with the emperor Leo, were all Scandinavian. In the treaty concluded in the following reign, forty-seven names were Scandinavian and three Slavonian. Olga, who succeeded Igor, was a Slavonian, and the principal officers about her were chosen from the same tribe. From that period the Slavi rose into favour, and participated largely in the government. The names of all the grand princes, subsequently to the reign of Olga, were Slavonian. The military superiority of the Varangians first raised them to the supreme power, which afterwards gradually devolved upon the more civilised Slavi, in whose language the laws were written. Time imperceptibly blended the two stocks, and the universal adoption of Christianity finally accomplished their consolidation.

On the death of Sviatozlaf, his companion in arms, Svenald, hastened with the remnant of his followers to Kief, to inform Yaropolk of his father's fate.

A view of the characters of the three brothers, upon whom the administration of the partitioned empire descended, is necessary to the just appreciation of the events of their brief but important reigns. Yaropolk, the grand prince of Kief, is described to have been of an inactive disposition, weak, incapable of decision, and easily led into crime under the dictation of others. Oleg, the Drevlian prince, was vindictive, rash, and cruel. Vladimir, who sat on the throne of Novgorod, was distinguished by a genius bold, original, and energetic: he was ambitious to the excess of guilt; filled with the most licentious passions, which he indulged on all occasions at the greatest cost; and his courage was so great as to have dazzled even the barbarians by whom he was surrounded. It is not difficult to foresee which of these princes was the most likely to conceive and execute the design of recombining the divided territories, and re-establishing the imperial power. But that design, magnificent as it was, had its origin in chance.

Svenald, either from choice or local circumstances, attached himself to the person of Yaropolk. Perhaps the preference he gave to one son may have awakened the jealousy of another, the old soldier having been an esteemed friend of their father; but although it is not known how offence was given, or resentment inspired, it is stated that Oleg, meeting the son of Svenald in a wood on a hunting party, suddenly fell upon him, without provocation, and assassinated him. There was nothing very remarkable in the act. Murder was common enough in those days, and grand princes seem to have had, or at all events to have claimed, an immunity for such direful freaks. But Svenald was a man capable of strong, deep, and implacable hate, and Yaropolk, his master, was a poor creature, easily turned in his hands to the purposes of so just a revenge. The prince was

soon persuaded, on some slight pretence, to carry an army into the country of the Drevlians. The irascible Oleg placed himself at the head of his forces. The brothers met: Oleg was beaten, and, taking precipitately to flight, was flung in the confusion over the parapet of a bridge, and smothered in the river below amongst the multitude of horses and troops that fell upon him in the disastrous rout. The irresolute Yaropolk is said to have been overwhelmed by remorse, to have thrown himself despairingly on the corpse of his brother, and to have lost no time in taking possession of the throne he had thus rendered vacant.

If regret was as transient in the heart of Yaropolk as his purposes were always indecisive, the contrary seems to have been the case with the valiant Vladimir. This prince, in the first transports of his sorrow for the death of his brother, retired from his capital, and went amongst the fugitive Varangians. He was stricken down by despondency. The opportunity was not suffered to escape by the crafty advisers of Yaropolk. They claimed the right to avail themselves of the deserted sovereignty; they seized upon the territories of Novgorod, which the feeble Yaropolk at once distributed amongst them, thus once more re-uniting in the one head the sole government of the empire.

But this was not an arrangement calculated for permanency. The prince wanted moral influence to consolidate his possessions. The chiefs who had seized upon Novgorod felt that its preservation must depend upon themselves, and that confidence in the nominal head of the state would be misplaced. Their power within was uncertain and divided; and their expectations from without were slight and unsatisfactory. At this juncture, before the petty usurpers of his throne had time to secure themselves in their acquisition, Vladimir, followed by a party of Varangians, who cheerfully aided him in the enterprise, re-entered the city. The people received him in triumph; Yaropolk's chiefs, taken by surprise by the suddenness of the movement, yielded without a

struggle; and the prince regained his dominions by the mere demonstration of arms. His first act was to dismiss the invaders with a message to his brother, informing him that, as he had crossed the frontiers in hostility, he might expect a visit in return from the army of Novgorod: a promise which was kept to the letter.

The daring genius of Vladimir was soon afforded an ample opportunity for developement. The daughter of Rogvolode, prince of Polotsk, a city standing on the Dvina, which subsequently conferred its title on a Polish palatinate, and was afterwards merged in the Russian empire, having attracted his regards, he demanded her in marriage. At the same time, his brother Yaropolk, by a strange coincidence that widened the breach between them, also made proposals for the princess. In this dilemma it was difficult for an inferior prince to choose: so, to remove from himself the delicate and responsible task of selection, Rogvolode desired his daughter to decide. Her answer was bold and conclusive. "I will never," she said, in reference to the custom which then prevailed for brides to pull off the boots of their husbands on the wedding night, "I will never unboot the son of a slave. I choose Yaropolk." This decision inflamed the pride of Vladimir, and he was not slow in seeking revenge. He marched against Polotsk, gave battle to Rogvolode, defeated him, and, not content with this satisfaction for the insult of a woman s tongue, slew him and his two sons with his own hand, and, with their blood still upon it, forced the young princess to become his wife.

This was but the initial scene to a tragedy of massacres. A voyvode of Yaropolk's, named Blude, a wretch of the most base description, who had been long in the confidence of his master, and received from him the highest marks of distinction, entered into a secret correspondence with Vladimir, the object of which was to lull the prince of Kief into an imaginary security, while his victorious brother, flushed with recent tri-

umphs and inspired by the loftiest ambition, was advancing upon the capital. This villain was, at the same moment, in the pay of both princes; and was of course faithful to neither. For the time, however, he was true to the besieger; and, finding that the people were resolved upon a desperate resistance, and knowing that the town was built with great strength, he ingeniously excited alarm in the mind of Yaropolk, by assuring him that the people were treacherously disposed towards him, and that his only safety lay in flight. The timid prince adopted this insidious council, and abandoned the town; which, thus deserted, soon fell into the hands of Vladimir. The flight of Yaropolk, however, did not procure him security. Wherever he went Blude went with him, informing the rival brother of his progress. Their steps were traced from place to place. Like the hare that runs from cover to cover and is still pursued, Yaropolk was hunted day after day by his remorseless and unnatural enemy. Even in this extremity he might have found an asylum, had not his evil genius still clung to him in the person of his bad minister, who allowed no opportunity of escape to occur. At last, wearied in spirit, and rendered desperate by the accumulated miseries of famine and pursuit, he determined to submit to his brother, weakly relying upon the sympathies of his nature for that mercy which was every where else denied to him. But he miscalculated upon the tenderness of Vladimir; and, as he was advancing to cast himself into a brother's arms, he was assassinated by some of the Varangians, in obedience to private orders that had been previously issued by their commander. Here was a double fratricide to cement an empire; but, ignoble as the deed was, it saved the state from the continued disasters of civil war.

Vladimir I. now ascended the throne, and commenced a career of sovereignty as remarkable for its extraordinary influence upon the moral character of the people, as for its mixed features of cruelty, licentiousness, and heroism. The wife of his deposed and murdered brother

was a Greek lady, eminent for her beauty and accomplishments. Originally a nun, she fell into the hands of Sviatozlaf amongst other prisoners, and that prince bestowed her upon his eldest son. When she was seized by Vladimir she was far advanced in pregnancy, but that circumstance presented no obstacle to the impetuous passion with which her charms inspired him. She became the victim of his desires; and, as reparation in some sort for the violence he had committed, he adopted the unborn child. The progeny of this incestuous intercourse was worthy of a murderer, and inherited all the base qualities of its second father. Doubting, probably, the fidelity of those around him, and with a view to make one terrible example, Vladimir no sooner assumed the government of Kief than he called Blude before him: he entertained him at his court for three days with royal magnificence, acknowledging to his followers how much he was indebted to his services; but when the term of this feasting elapsed, he addressed the traitor in these words: — "I have kept my promise strictly. I have received you with welcome, and heaped unwonted honours upon your head. This I have done as your friend: to-day, as judge, I condemn the traitor and the assassin of his prince." The order was issued, and the villain instantly put to death.

The Varangians who had followed Vladimir from his retirement, and assisted him in the recovery of his throne, and his enterprise against his brother, now clamoured for the reward of their services. They demanded that Kief should be placed under tribute for their maintenance; but Vladimir, who, while he perceived the impolicy of so abrupt a levy, was not yet quite prepared to resist his impetuous dependants, postponed his answer from time to time under various ingenious pretences, until at last he fortified himself with such increased means of protection, that they saw the inutility of pressing so large a demand. Changing their tone, therefore, they prayed for permission to go into

Greece, and seek their fortunes after their own fashion. This permission was promply granted by the prince, after he had drafted some of the boldest and most experienced among them into his service. But the lawless project of these desperate soldiers was not destined to be crowned with much success; for Vladimir, unwilling to make an enemy of the Greek emperor for the sake of getting rid of a handful of discontented followers, privately informed that monarch of the whole design, and begged of him to arrest the troops and disperse them singly over the empire, so that they should cease to be an object of alarm to either government.

Vladimir's first object, after he felt himself firmly fixed in the sole possession of those vast tracts that gradual conquests had added to the Russian dominion, was to return thanks to the gods, with the zeal of a true barbarian. He had just cause for this display of gratitude. By his own perseverance he had already largely extended his authority beyond the boundaries marked by his triumphant predecessors; he had penetrated into Poland and subjugated several towns, and was only induced to turn aside from the pursuit of aggrandisement in that quarter, by the prospect of easier conquests elsewhere. The Yatoiges, lying on the skirts of the Bogue, and the Bulgarians, on the eastern side, were severally reduced; so that, in whatever direction the prince cast his eyes abroad, he saw himself master of recent acquisitions.

The announcement of Vladimir's pious intentions was received with great applause by the people, who considered these interstitial symptoms of religious zeal as the means of propitiating the future favours of the gods. Cruel in the excess of the holy feeling, they were not satisfied with mere thanksgiving, but required that a human victim should be offered up as a suitable sacrifice to the benignant Perune, whose whiskers on this occasion were replenished in the most prodigal spirit. The victim selected was a Christian youth, whose father was known to be an ardent disciple of the

new philosophy. Costly statues were erected to the honour of the metaphorical divinities, and extensive preparations were made for the reception of the young unbeliever. But the spirit of Christianity was not readily subdued in its early converts by these scenes of wretched superstition. The father of the youth not only refused to yield up his son to the horrid rite, but resolutely protested against the whole proceeding. This sort of heroism was not to be borne by the offended mob, whose outraged piety vented itself in the immediate massacre of the father and son. It is recorded in the chronicle, that these unfortunate martyrs were murdered in their own house, and expired locked in an embrace.

But the gods no doubt were well pleased by this sanguinary tribute, and profited moreover by the disappointment that occurred in the form of the offering. The zeal of Vladimir kindled into still more decisive evidences of faith, and spread itself over the whole nation. In various directions he ordered splendid memorials to be erected in the names of the deities; and so valuable were the embellishments with which he enriched the temples, and the presents he piled upon the altars, that the fame of his munificence reached the ears of all the neighbouring princes, who were now more desirous than ever to cultivate his friendship. The obvious anxiety of those princes was to attach the magnificent Vladimir each to his own creed, in order that the church should receive the advantage of his liberality. Deputies and ambassadors were accordingly sent to his court from the principal seats of the different religions of Europe. The catholic church was represented by her missionaries; the doctrines of Mahomet by persons from Bulgaria; the laws of Moses by the Jews; and the Greek ritual by a philosopher of great repute in his nation. None of these, however, made any impression upon the prince except the Greek, whose arguments were so far successful as to induce Vladimir to load him with rewards, and dismiss him with ho-

nours.* But the feeling which this hurried examination of conflicting doctrines produced, was neither satisfactory nor decisive. The mind of Vladimir was shaken but not convinced; and his reason had admitted so many truths, and recognised so many fallacies, that he ceased to be content with his idol worship, without having been able to substitute any other in its place. In this dilemma he organised a commission of ten learned persons, who were instructed to take their departure for the several countries where the various tenets were received, to investigate and compare the arguments and evidences advanced by their professors, and to report fully the result on their return.

These learned persons were barbarians after all. Accustomed to a religion that addressed the passions and was tolerant of the indolence and ancient usages of their tribe, it was natural that they should feel no sympathy in those creeds that were simple in their principles, and plain and unpretending in their practice. The gorgeous, the sensual, and the declamatory were more intelligible to their understandings, and more favourable to their predispositions. The Mahometan church made too many demands upon their self-control. It was the religion of an eastern climate, adroitly adapted to the enervating lusts and luscious temptations that beset its followers. Its transplantation into the cold regions of the North would have been a fruitless labour; for the people could not comprehend the motives by which it restrained some of the desires, nor feel the influence of those promises of beatitude by which it nourished others. The learned commissioners, accordingly, passed over the Mahomedan church in contempt. Nor were they better pleased with the Manichean phi-

* Some of the answers which the old historians attribute to Vladimir on the occasion of these deputations are characteristic of his temper, and worth preservation. He rejected Mahometanism because it prohibited the use of wine, which, he said, was indispensable to the Russians; catholicism was disapproved of by him because it recognised an earthly deity in the pope, which was a doctrine his haughty spirit could not brook; and he spurned Judaism because it had no country, and because its professors were wanderers over the earth under a punishment for their sins. These brief objections contain the kernels of sound political arguments.

losophy, which was too much involved in the settlement of abstract ideas for men who dwelt with things visible. The Latin churches in Germany shared the same measure of aversion. There, the temples of the living God were poor and mean, the priests were tricked out in tasteless and meretricious finery, and the forms of worship were monotonous, grotesque, and unintelligible. But these objections dissolved at once before the minarets of St. Sophia, and the extravagant magnificence of the Greek religion. The variety, the splendour, and the sublimity in externals that governed all the details and ceremonials of the church at Constantinople, inspired the learned commissioners with wonder, and touched their hearts with a regenerating grace. They felt that they had found the true belief at last, and that their pilgrimage had auspiciously terminated at the golden gates of a rich and luxurious empire. There were not wanting other aids to assist in their conversion, so that they returned to Vladimir fired with a new enthusiasm, and prepared to overwhelm him with a picture of grandeur which even his pagan greatness could not resist.

Vladimir's heated imagination received the recital in the most favourable manner. Many coincidences appeared to justify the decision of the wise commissioners. The early conversion of the princess Olga, the stupendous power of the Byzantine empire, and the beauty and costliness of the outward forms, satisfied Vladimir that the Greek church was the true church. After a decent time spent in deliberation with his council, who were as well disposed as himself to adopt the orthodox splendour, he resolved to undergo the public ceremony of baptism. One difficulty, however, presented itself. He had no Greek priests within reach. There certainly were some poor priests settled in Kief, but Vladimir would not submit to the ceremony unless it were performed by one of the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries, of which there were none in Russia. His mind, fertile in expedients, was not daunted by this difficulty; and, undoubtedly,

the expedient he adopted was in admirable keeping with the whole tenor of his life and character. To solicit the Greek emperors, Basil and Constantine, for the assistance of their archbishops, would be derogatory to his imperious nature; and, as he would not ask the favour, the next course that appeared feasible was to wrest it by force of arms. He accordingly declared war upon Greece for the purpose of procuring the means of becoming a Christian. The act was rather averse to the spirit of its purpose, but it had the best effects in promoting the adoption of Christianity; for the Russians were so pleased with the predatory part of the excursion, that they were easily reconciled to its spiritual object. On this occasion, if we may believe one old chronicle, Vladimir, having repaired with a powerful army to the Chersonese, under the walls of Kaffa, in the Crimea, put up this prayer to Jehovah: "O God, grant me thy help to take this town, that I may carry from it Christians and priests to instruct me and my people, and to convey the true religion into my dominions!"

In his first attempts on the city, great destruction of human life took place; and thousands were destined to perish because a pagan prince would not condescend to be baptised like any body else. The siege continued six months; and the army of Vladimir suffered so severely from a variety of disasters, that he would have been obliged to abandon the town and the new faith in despair, if a fortunate act of treachery had not turned the scales in his favour. A citizen within the walls, or more likely a priest, either from motives of excessive zeal in the cause of religion, or to gratify some malignant passions, shot a letter on the head of an arrow from the ramparts down to the Russian camp, to inform Vladimir that the water-spring from which the subterranean pipes of the city were supplied was situated immediately in his rear. This intelligence raised the hopes of the besiegers. The prince broke up the channels, stopped the flow of the water, and finally forced the citizens, under all the horrors of thirst, to surrender. Having

secured Kaffa, the key to the Crimea, he might now be considered to be in actual possession of the Chersonese.

There is something very ludicrous in the character of this exploit. Any archbishop in the Grecian empire would have joyfully baptised the prince, and been proud of the office; but Vladimir's ambition would not permit him to accept the performance of a ceremony which he thus waged a cruel war to procure.

The baptismal ceremony was performed in great state by the archbishop of Cherson. But this was not the only triumph to which Vladimir aspired. His baptism was accompanied by another rite of the church which promised an earthly inheritance of as much moment to the ambitious prince as the heavenly inheritance of Christianity. Inflamed by his conquests, he desired to cement them by a union with the Byzantine emperors; and in the heat of victory despatched a message to Bazil and Constantine, demanding the hand of their sister, the princess Anne, in marriage. The demand was accompanied by a threat of treating the capital as he had treated Kaffa, in the event of a refusal. The emperors were not in a condition to risk his displeasure, and, although they hesitated and parleyed, they yielded at last; and on the same day (988) that received Vladimir into the bosom of the church under the name of Basil, his marriage with the princess Anne took place.* In return for this act of compliance on the part of the emperors, Vladimir restored the conquered territories, listened obediently to the full exposition of his adopted creed, and returned to Kief loaded, not with the spoils of war, but with the peace-offerings of religion, priests, relics, sacred vessels, vases of holy water and frankincense, images of saints, church books, and a wife.

Being now an admitted Christian, Vladimir's next

* It is not a little remarkable, that nearly at the same period, being only twenty-three years before, and under precisely similar circumstances, Christianity was introduced into the neighbouring kingdom of Poland. Miecislas I demanded the hand of the king of Hungary's daughter in marriage which was granted on condition of his embracing the Christian faith. The baptismal and marriage ceremonies were, as in the instance of Vladimir, performed on the same day.

care was to extendthe blessings of the true religion to his subjects, which he accomplished after a method peculiar to those ages when knowledge was struggling forward in fetters. He did not attempt to vanquish by degrees the superstitions of the people, nor did he wait to observe the influence of the wisdom and divine example of Christianity upon their hearts ; it was no part of his policy to loiter upon providence, or trust to the natural progress of opinion. A despot upon earth, he carried his overbearing plans even into the dispensation of the revelations of heaven. His late gods were no sooner abandoned than destroyed. They who had been his idols, now became the objects of his contempt and derision. Perune, the golden-whiskered, the father of the gods, was destined to the greatest measure of contumely. The image was stripped of all its costly ornaments; and when the naked log was exposed to the eyes of the people (not a bad way to open them), it was tied to the tail of a horse, dragged up a steep hill that overlooked the Dnieper, and, after having been soundly cudgelled by twelve brawny soldiers, it was flung into the river amidst shouts and groans. All the other gods suffered a similar fate.* But the new-born enthusiasm of the royal convert did not rest here. He issued a peremptory proclamation commanding all the inhabitants of Kief to assemble on a certain day on the banks of the Dnieper to receive baptism. Multitudes flocked to the spot; and on an agreed signal from the monarch they plunged into the water, infants being held in the arms of their mother, and the aged being supported by the young; so that the whole population became Christian by a movement as concise and decisive as the sudden wheel of a military battalion in the performance of mo-

* At Novgorod, Perune is stated to have risen out of the water after the citizens had precipitated him over the bridge, and, casting a staff amongst them, to have exclaimed, in a voice loud as a trumpet, "Citizens, I leave you that in remembrance of me" The tradition was preserved in the chronicles of the town; and the young people, on the anniversary of the day, used to run about the streets striking each other unawares with sticks. Legends of this kind are curious only in so far as they point attention to the mental condition of the people.

dern tactics. The *naïve* motive avowed by the population for thus promptly embracing the new creed deserves to be recorded: "That religion," they exclaimed, "must be good which is adopted by the prince and the boyards." This great change, however, was not universal. In the more remote and inaccessible districts, paganism continued to subsist as late as the twelfth century.

Transitions such as these are always accompanied by excess. Vladimir was not satisfied with the destruction of the old idols, and the instantaneous conversion of his subjects; he desired to carry the virtues of Christianity as far as he had formerly enforced the superstitions of paganism. His life was now the antithesis of his past career. He who, according to some accounts, had four, and, to others, six wives and 800 concubines, now dismissed his lascivious train, and exhibited an example of fidelity to his consort. He whose march of slaughter and rapine had stretched to the Ouralian mountains, towards the Caspian, into Taurida, and had over-run Gallicia, Lithuania, and Livonia, and who wantonly sacrificed human life on the altars of his gods, now hesitated to make war against his enemies, to resist aggression, or even to punish the most atrocious criminal, from an extravagant sensibility that would not permit him to shed human blood. He drew largely on the public revenues for alms to be disbursed in charitable institutions; he built houses for pious uses, endowed schools and hospital foundations, encouraged the liberal and useful arts, strengthened the defensive fortifications of his towns, established a wise system of colonisation, and, by the introduction of some good judicial regulations, that did not, however, aspire to the dignity or utility of a code, removed much of the barbarous and unsettled policy that disfigured the governments of his predecessors. In all these things he showed that his mind was capable of a powerful grasp of whatever measures he undertook to accomplish; and that the danger to be apprehended was not that he would fail, but that his energies might by chance be directed to evil as well as good ends. His

subjects were so dazzled by the firmness of his character, that they gave him the name of Great on account of his military achievements, and called him Saint on account of his extraordinary zeal. The chroniclers call him the Russian Solomon ; and, considering that his concubines were so numerous, the title was not inappropriate.

But his sense did not enable him to anticipate the possible consequences of immediate schemes of polity ; and either his false confidence in his own judgment, or his rash resistance to the admonitions of history, led him to adopt that plan of parcelling out his dominions into hereditary fiefs, which had already produced a national convulsion, and which was fated once more to dislocate the frame of the empire. His offspring, legitimate and illegimate, was numerous. They could not live at court without command : they could not endure the empty honours of subjects of the highest rank, without some personal share in authority ; for it is only in a civilised and instructed era that men of the highest station learn to reconcile themselves to the necessity of sinking individual distinctions in the predominant demands of the public interest. The climate of Russia forbade the alternative of tranquil retirement and luxurious ease ; it would not admit of the resource of the seraglio and the cage, to which, in the East, the superabundant princes of the blood were condemned. It required excitements physical and mental, activity, and bold exploit. They should, therefore, either be provided for, or put out of the way by means at which the spirit of Christianity revolted. Vladimir yielded to the apparent necessity ; for the humanity that had taken possession of his heart, prevented him from seeing any political escape from the difficulties of his situation. He partitioned his kingdom among them, making fresh principalities, breaking up the principle of union and strength, and opening disastrous facilities to the destruction of the solid possessions he had acquired in a life of glory. This act of folly produced the ruin which Vladimir could not foresee, but which was

plainly prefigured in the miseries that followed the triad of appanages created by the unfortunate Sviatoslaf.

In the interim, the Petchenegans, taking advantage of the weakness of Vladimir, which was hourly manifesting itself in abrupt and injudicious reforms, advanced upon his dominions. The two armies lay at the opposite sides of the Sula; but the Petchenegan chief, not quite assured, perhaps, of his own power, proposed to Vladimir, to spare the blood of their soldiers by allowing the quarrel to be decided in single combat between two champions to be selected from the troops; it being a condition on the issue, that the vanquished should abstain from hostile demonstration for three years. Vladimir accepted the proposal; but not being prepared to name a soldier of sufficient prowess to be matched against the huge warrior that stood forth on the side of the Petchenegans, he parleyed for time, which was granted. This appointment was postponed from the same cause; and the Russians were likely to have lost the stake by failing to attempt its redemption, when an old man, who had long served with his four sons in the Russian army, presented himself before Vladimir, to offer the services of a fifth son, who was endowed with prodigious strength. The young man was immediately ordered to make an experimental trial of his physical powers against an infuriated bull in an arena prepared for the occasion. The animal was irritated by men with red-hot irons; but such was the skill and vigour exhibited by the youth, that he speedily knocked the bull down, and tore off his skin as a trophy. This proof of strength and valour was deemed sufficient, and the young Russian was accordingly declared the champion of his country. The combatants met in an open space between the two camps; and although the gigantic Petchenegan looked upon his adversary with pity and contempt, he soon found that he miscalculated his courage and capacity. The Russian closed at once with his foe, and brought him to the earth; in a few

moments the fate of the contending parties was decided in the death of the Petchenegan. Some doubt is thrown upon this story, which may possibly be magnified and embellished in the details; but, as we have reason to believe that a quarrel between these nations was settled by single combat, and as we know that the custom prevailed amongst the people of the North, we see no grounds for impugning a circumstance which has nothing in it so marvellous as to disturb the confidence of historical students. The only part of the relation which appears to be doubtful is the sequel, which sets forth that the Petchenegans fled in dismay when their champion fell, and that they were pursued and routed with great slaughter. This may be a flourish of the old record; and even if it be true, it reflects discredit upon the victims, whom it charges with a breach of compact. The young Russian was raised from being a currier to the rank of the nobility, together with his father; and a town, deriving its name from the hero, was built on the spot where the duel took place.

The Petchenegans appear to have been inveterate opponents of the Russians. They were constantly engaged in petty broils or open warfare; and, until Vladimir embraced Christianity, and in a great measure forsook the use of the sword, a similar disposition was exhibited by the Russians. But a better spirit grew up with the introduction of a better system of religion, which seemed to influence even where it did not strike root. For three years, the term of the armistice, these contests ceased altogether; but at the end of the period we find the enemy attempting a new incursion against a town which Vladimir was vainly endeavouring to succour. The hero of so many fields was beaten in his own trenches, and would have lost his life had he not fortunately secured a hiding place under the arch of a bridge, while the troops of the Petchenegans, losing the scent, passed on.

Calamities now thickened upon Vladimir, who was

growing old and feeble. His public discomfitures arising from discontent in the distant principalities, were rendered still more harassing by domestic sorrows. His wife and a favourite son died; and one of his sons, Yaropolk, on whom he had bestowed the government of one of his fiefs, refused to pay the customary tribute, and armed himself in rebellion against his father. This was the climax of his afflictions. The old man was compelled to collect an army, and, putting himself at its head, to march against his ungrateful son. But the prospect of this unnatural conflict broke down the declining energies of the Christian parent, and before he could reach the point of action he expired of grief on the road. The catastrophe was in keeping with the tenor of his latter days, and loses much of its tragic force in the recollections of the domestic iniquities he committed in the early part of his reign.

Vladimir was one of the great men of his age. His intellect went beyond it in comprehensiveness and daring. Throughout the whole of his military career he evinced a courage and subtlety that terrified his enemies and won the confidence of his countrymen. He never paused at the means by which his ends were to be accomplished; and thus, through good and through evil, he generally secured success. His life presents a brilliant series of victories, acquisitions, and advances towards civilisation. Having reunited a scattered and partitioned people, his next care was to strengthen their resources and enlarge their territorial possessions. His magnificence excited the curiosity of contemporary princes, who, desirous of his alliance, or anxious for his overthrow, courted a knowledge of him and his system of government. This led to a reciprocation that was unexpected on both sides. Vladimir obtained, through the intercourse thus produced, a glimpse of the machinery of foreign codes and creeds, and determined to profit by a further acquaintance with them. We have seen by what primitive agency the Christian religion was intro-

duced into Russia; but even those who may be disposed to smile at such a commission of inquirv into spiritual things, must admit that the ludicrous form of the design must constitute an argument against its efficacy. From the date of the admission of the Greek doctrines into his kingdom, Vladimir addressed himself with zeal to their dissemination. He set the example of practical Christianity, and laboured earnestly to inculcate instruction upon the people, and improve their taste as well as increase their knowledge. He employed Grecian architects to erect palaces, churches, and public institutions; and he established seminaries for the education of the different classes of the community, at the head of which he installed eminent men from Greece. Sc great was the resistance to these innovations upon the barbarous ignorance that covered the land, that, in most cases, the children of the nobility and others were taken by force from their parents to be placed in these establishments. But Vladimir persisted, and, with his usual perseverance, succeeded. His character, however, had undergone a change. The dominant spirit that triumphed in the storm had, as it were, sunk down in the peaceful atmosphere of religion. The power to be severe had left him; he was disarmed of the despotic qualities of his nature. His offspring discovered new claims upon his affections in the holy obligations of the merciful doctrines he had embraced, and out of a deep sense of these ties arose that weakness which tempted him to settle his sons in independent governments, to the risk of his own safety and the integrity of the empire. These governments being of very unequal extent, and being all dependent by tribute upon the grand prince at Kief, were not based upon stable principles; and it might have been easily foreseen that the issue would be confusion and separation. Each petty prince was rendered free from the control of the grand prince, and equally free from the interference of neighbouring powers; so that the whole kingdom might be convulsed by obscure and endless conflicts, while it maintained no

conservative resource in the head authority to check the progress of the multitudinous strife. The petty princes might go to war with each other not only without the permission, but against the will of the grand prince; for so complete was the delegation and gift of the aged Vladimir, that he deprived himself of all right and title to advise or interfere so long as the payment of a trifling tribute left him without an excuse for complaint. Princes so unequally provided for, naturally commenced their disaffection by quarrelling amongst themselves, and ended it by a declaration of revolt against the incompetent prince who claimed their nominal allegiance. Yaropolk, the prince of Novgorod, and most favoured of his children, was the first to refuse the tribute to Vladimir. Indignant at this outrage upon his office and his feelings, he determined to punish it: but the effort was too touching for his spirits to sustain; it broke his heart. After a reign of forty-five years, he died in the year 1015, on his way to battle against his insubordinate blood. The people mourned his loss; and in gratitude for his many acts of greatness and goodness, putting out of view his ferocious and base deeds, they enrolled him amongst the saints of the church, — an honour which his name enjoys in common with a numerous list of people who did not deserve it better. Nearly eight centuries afterwards, in more instructed times, the empress Catherine instituted an order of knighthood to his honour; so that the church and state contributed all they could to perpetuate his name.

CHAP. V.

INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY. — INTRIGUES AND FRATRICIDES OF SVIATOPOLK. — HE IS DECLARED PRINCE OF KIEF. — YAROSLAF DRIVES HIM OUT. — HE IS SUCCOURED BY THE POLES. — DEFEAT OF YAROSLAF, AND RESTITUTION OF THE THRONE. — TREACHERY OF SVIATOPOLK. — HIS FINAL DEFEAT AND DEATH. — YAROSLAF, THE LEGISLATOR, RE-COMBINES THE EMPIRE UNDER ONE HEAD. — ITS CONDITION, MORAL AND PHYSICAL. — YAROSLAF INTRODUCES A CODE OF WRITTEN LAWS. — HE PARTITIONS THE EMPIRE WITH RESTRICTIONS. — HIS DEATH AND CHARACTER.

WITH the death of Vladimir terminated a remarkable era in Russian history; that in which the nation was raised to the loftiest height of pagan glory. A change so important in its consequences and so universal in its influence, as the introduction of the Christian religion, was necessarily accompanied by circumstances that interrupted for a period the repose of the country, and even threatened its loosely connected institutions. The Russians had not yet learned to estimate the advantages of civilisation. Like a rock between two tides, they were washed by the retreating waters of Gothic superstition on the one side, while the waves of truth and reason were gradually rising at the other. But, although they were now passing through a season of dangerous suspense, it does not appear that any contests arose distinctly fomented by religious differences. There are no Christian heroes, no deeds of spiritual devotion, no instances of martyrdom, nor of the church spirit going abroad to enlighten or to persecute, to be found in the annals of Russia. The struggle was in the mind; but the population was too ignorant to perceive it distinctly, or to give it an external form. They could not analyse their new faith, nor utterly repudiate their old. Hence, although they broke their house-

hold gods in obedience to the example of their superiors, yet they did not trample upon them in derision, but rudely scrawled them upon the walls of their houses; so that while the palpable figure was demolished, they contrived to preserve the outline of the image before the eye. Then came a sort of mixed creed, in which the living God was degraded to an association with blundering demons and guardian spirits that were to be distinguished from Him only by inferiority of rank, and subserviency to the omnipotent authority. It is to this easy escape from the hazards of comparison that we may attribute the absence of religious pretexts in the civil wars that sprung up after the death of Vladimir. Had Christianity been preached with more activity, or had it been enforced with less determination, the people would have been instructed in the art of disputation, and have discovered abundant reasons for an armed recusancy. As it was, the only immediate danger that attended the change was the increased power of mischief it vested in the hands of the princes and the people in authority, who alone were enabled to profit by the knowledge it imparted. That power was prolific of disasters, and was wielded with so much effect as nearly to lay the empire in ruins.

Sviatopolk, who claimed a divided parentage between Vladimir and Yarapolk — being the son of the widow of the latter, who on the murder of her husband was forced to live with the former, she being already pregnant — was at Kief when the news of Vladimir's death arrived. He had long indulged in a project for seizing the throne, which was favoured in its formation by the increasing imbecility of his father, whose death now ripened it into action. His ambitious schemes embraced a plan for securing the sole monarchy, by obtaining the grand princedom first, and then by artifice or treachery to put his brothers out of the way, so that he might thus re-organise under the one head the divided and independent governments. The moment

had now arrived when this violent scheme was to be put into execution. His brother Boris, who was employed with the army against the Petchenegans, was the first object of his hate and fear, because his good qualities had so strongly recommended him to the nation, that he was the most popular of the brothers, and the most likely to gain the ascendancy through the will of the people. There was but one sure method to get rid of this formidable rival, and Sviatopolk did not hesitate to adopt it. When the intelligence of his father's decease reached Boris, he declared that the throne devolved properly upon the elder brother, and personally rejected the unanimous offer of the soldiery, to assist in placing him upon it. This noble insensibility to the general wish, alienated his troops, and exposed him to the designs of his treacherous rival. The assassins who were commissioned to despatch him, found easy access to his tent, and having first slain a faithful Russian who threw himself before the person of his master, they soon effected their horrible purpose. Boris, however, still breathed when he was carried into the presence of Sviatopolk, who, perceiving that life was not quite extinct, saw its last gleam extinguished in his presence.

Two other brothers met a similar fate. Gleb was informed by letter that his father was ill, and desired his return. On his way he was so injured by a fall from his horse as to be forced to continue his journey in a litter. In this state he learned that Sviatopolk had issued orders for his murder, which, tempted probably by the reward, were carried into effect by his own cook, who stabbed him with a knife in the breast. Both Gleb and Boris were afterwards sainted, which appears to have been the last compliment paid by the Russians to their ill-used princes. These villanies alarmed a third brother, who fled to Hungary; but the emissaries of the triumphant assassin seized him on his flight, brought him back to the capital, and put him to death.

The way to the throne was now tolerably well cleared. Sviatopolk I. found no further difficulty in assuming the government of Kief, and calling in such of the tributary provinces as his recent excesses either terrified into submission or reduced within his control. But the most powerful opponent yet remained to be subjugated.

Yarosláf, prince of Novgórod, alarmed and outraged by the cruelties of his brother, and apprehending that, unless they were speedily arrested, they would spread into his own principality, determined to advance upon Kief and make war on the usurping fratricide. The Novgorodians, to whom he was greatly endeared by the wisdom and mildness of his sway, entered so warmly into the expedition, that the tyrant was driven out of Kief without much cost of blood, and obliged to flee for refuge to his father-in-law, the duke of Poland. At that period Poland was resting from the ruinous effects of a disastrous and straggling campaign in Germany, which had considerably reduced her power, and curtailed her means of satisfying the ambition of her restless ruler. The representations of Sviatopolk rekindled the ardour of the Poles, who, animated as much by the desire of recovering these provinces which Vladimir had formerly wrested from Miecelsas, as by the prospect of ulterior aggrandisement, readily fell into the proposals of the exiled prince to make an attempt for his restoration to the throne. Boleslas, at the head of a powerful force, advanced into Russia. Yaroslaf, however, apprised of the movements of the enemy, met them on the banks of the Bug, prepared for battle. The army of Boleslas lay at the opposite side. For some time the invader hesitated to ford the river under the fire of the Russian soldiers; and might, probably, have returned as he came, had not a petty occurrence excited his impetuosity, and urged him forward. A Russian soldier one day, while both armies lay inactive within sight of each other, stood upon the bank of the river, and with gesticulations and bold language mimicked the corpulent size and gait of

the Polish duke. This insult roused the spirit of Boleslas, who, plunging into the water, and calling on his men to follow, landed in the face of the Russians at the head of his intrepid troops. A long and well-contested action took place, and tardily closed in favour of the Poles, who, flushed with victory, pursued the fugitives to the walls of the capital. Sviatopolk was now reinstated in his throne, and Yaroslaf, disheartened by defeat, made his way to Novgorod, where, doubtful even of the fidelity of his own people, he prepared to cross the Baltic in order to get beyond the reach of his brother. The Novgorodians, however, were faithful, and proved their attachment to his person by taking down the rigging of the vessels which had been got in readiness for his departure, and by levying contributions amongst themselves for the purpose of enabling him to procure auxiliary troops to assist in the recovery of the grand principality.

In the mean time, Sviatopolk was unconsciously facilitating his own downfall. After the Poles had helped him to re-establish himself, he began to feel the oppressive superiority of their presence, and plotted a base design to remove them. He instigated the inhabitants and the soldiery to conspire against the strangers, and massacre them in the midst of their security. Boleslas discovered the plot before it had time to be carried into execution; and, disgusted at a design so cruel and treacherous, he resolved to take ample revenge. The capital was plundered of its accumulated wealth by the incensed Poles, who, but for the moderation of their leader, would have burned it to ashes; and, loaded with treasures, they returned towards the Russian frontiers. Sviatopolk was artful enough to turn the whole transaction to the discredit of his ally, and thus to rouse the courage of his followers, who were easily persuaded to take the field against Boleslas. The belligerents met on the banks of the Bug before the Poles had passed the boundaries. The battle that ensued terminated in the discomfiture of Sviatopolk, who now returned with broken fortunes

to the capital which he had so lately entered with acclamations of triumph. This was the opportunity for Yaroslaf to appear with his followers. The usurper's troops were so reduced by his late disasters, that he was forced to seek assistance from the Petchenegans, the hereditary enemies of the country; and they, tempted by hopes of booty, flocked to his standard to resist the approach of Yaroslaf. The armies met on a plain near the place where Boris had been assassinated by the command of the fratricide. The coincidence was fortunate; for Yaroslaf, taking a prudent advantage of the circumstance, employed all his eloquence in describing to his soldiers the righteousness of the cause in which they were engaged against a second Cain, the shedder of a brother's blood. His oration, concluding with a fervent prayer to the Almighty to nerve his arm, and direct his sword, so that he might be made the instrument of reparation in so just a fight, wrought powerfully upon the assembled army, and excited them to an unexampled display of bravery. The advantage of numbers was on the opposite side; but such was the courage exhibited by the Novgorodians, that after a desperate battle, which lasted throughout the whole day, from morning dawn until sunset, they succeeded in putting the enemy completely to flight. Sviatopolk, in whom the tyrannous spirit was rapidly expiring, took to horse and fled, but died in a wretched condition on the road.

The zeal and bravery of the Novgorodians were not forgotten by Yaroslaf when he ascended the throne and concentrated the sole dominion in himself. His first attention was directed to the revision of the ill-constructed laws of their city, and to the grant of certain franchises, which had the effect of procuring unanimity amongst the inhabitants, and of establishing the peaceful arts and commercial interests of the place upon a sure and solid foundation. He at once evinced a capacity for legislation beyond the abilities of his most distinguished predecessors, and set about the labours of improvement in so vigorous a temper, and with so much aptitude for his

objects, that the happiest results sprang up under his administration in all parts of the empire.

But it was not in the destiny of the age in which he lived to permit such extensive benefits to progress without interruption. His brother Motislaf, the seventh son of Vladimir, and prince of Tmutaracan *, a warrior distinguished in his wars against the Kossoges, discontented with the enlarged authority that the grand princedom vested in the hands of Yaroslaf, transmitted to him a petition praying of him to cede to him a part of the fraternal appanage which he governed. Yaroslaf partially assented to the request, by granting to his brother the small territory of Murom. This grant was insufficient to satisfy Motislaf, who immediately equipped an army and proceeded to wage an offensive war against the monarch. In this war the invader was successful, but he was not ungenerous in his triumph; for when he had vanquished the grand prince, he restored to him so large a portion of his possessions that the empire became equally divided between them. In this league of amity the brothers continued to govern for seven years, during the remainder of the life of Motislaf; and at his death the colossal empire, with all its appanages, reverted to the hands of Yaroslaf.

It is in this part of his reign, and in this memorable period in the annals of the nation, that we find the first development of justice in Russian legislation, and the first application of philosophy to the management of public affairs. Although Yaroslaf's career commenced with war, and although he extended his arms into

* An antiquarian inquiry instituted by the indefatigable Catherine, and prosecuted by an imperial councillor, Alexey Ivanovitch Mussin Puschkin, establishes the geographical position of this territory, which had long been a question of doubt and dispute. The document containing the proofs was printed in quarto at St. Petersburg in 1794. It is there shown by collateral evidence, and confirmed by a Russian inscription on a stone monument then just discovered, that Tmutaracan was situated in the isle of Taman, forming a key to the confluence of the sea of Azof with the Black Sea. The settlement of the point is of no great value, except to such readers of Russian history as desire to track the progress of territorial aggrandizement step by step; which, however, will generally be found a difficult task, not only on account of the fluctuations and corruptions of names, but also because the records of these incidental acquisitions are extremely irregular and imperfect.

Finland, Livonia, Lithuania, and Bulgaria, and even penetrated into Byzantium, yet it was not by war that the glory of his name or the utility of his rule was to be accomplished. His wars could hardly claim the merits of conquests; and in some instances they terminated in such vague conclusions, that they resembled drawn battles on which much treasure had been lavished in vain. In Greece he was routed. He was driven before the soldiers of Sviatopolk, and forced to surrender at his own gates to the victorious Motislaf. His utmost successes amounted to preservation against aggression; and so indifferent was he to the barbarian mode of elevating the empire by wanton and hazardous expeditions into the neighbouring countries, that on most of those occasions he intrusted the command of his army to his lieutenants. It is necessary to explain that part of his character, in order that the loftiness of his nature may be the more clearly understood.

At this period the Russian empire comprehended those enormous tracts that lie between the Volga and the lower Danube, and stretch from the Black Sea to the Baltic. This accumulation of territory was not the work of a progressive political system; it was not accomplished by the growth of a powerful government, or by the persevering pursuit of co-operating interests. It did not arise in order, nor was there any direct motive of combination in its extension. The nucleus round which it spread had long been shattered, and the increasing circles of acquisition were in a constant state of dismemberment, separation, and recall. The surface of the land from the days of Rurik was over-run by revolutions. The marauder, legalised by his tribe, haunted the forest and devastated the populous places, carrying away with him plunder, or usurping authority wherever he remained. The feudal system, introduced by the Scandinavians as a provision for troublesome leaders, was carried to the excess of criminality. The nominal head was disavowed and resisted at will; and the subordinate governments made war upon each other,

or joined in schemes of rapine, with impunity. The maintenance of each fief seemed to depend upon civil war; and the office of the grand prince was not so much to govern the dominions he possessed, as to keep, if he could, the dominion he was called upon to govern. Christianity had failed to destroy, although it assisted to ameliorate, these traits of savage life. It modified, but did not change, the dispositions of society. In all that related to the outward forms, the people, particularly the rich, were prompt to publish their zeal. They were converted to the point of fear. They built churches and monasteries, and gave alms, and entertained the priests; but they continued to indulge in their former sensualities. They had their music, their wine, their feasting, and their concubines. These indulgences, forbidden by the church, were expiated by donations; for the first part of the Greek religion that found access to the understandings of the Russians was the escape-valve of repentant contribution. In their old age, the wealthy retired to monasteries to soothe their consciences when the dominion of the passions was at an end. Thus the most vicious features of paganism were retained; and thus the same system of spoliage and wasting strife, that through a series of reverses enlarged the boundaries of the empire under its petty rulers, continued to be pursued.

Russia, combining these gigantic outlines of territory, was now, for the second time, united under one head; but, for the first time, under a head that could discern her necessities, and provide for them. Her Gothic glory had passed away, but its conquests remained. Her civilisation was in progress, but it wanted the impetus of knowledge, and the control of law. The reign of the sword had done its work: what was required was the reign of justice and wisdom to improve and consolidate the triumphs and acquisitions of the barbarian era. In Yaroslaf, Russia found a prince whose genius was adapted to her critical circumstances. He effectually raised her from the obscurity of ignorance, and

placed her for a time amongst the family of European states. He made her church independent, increased the privileges of the people, facilitated the means of instruction, and elevated her national dignity by contracting domestic alliances with the most powerful countries. His sister was queen of Poland; his three daughters-in-law were Greek, German, and English princesses; and the queens of Norway, Hungary, and France were his daughters. But these were the least memorable evidences of his greatness. He gave Russia a code of laws, which was more valuable to her than the highest connections, or the most ambitious accessions of dominion.

This code must be judged in reference to the times in which it was enacted, and in comparison with the formless mass of confused precedents it superseded. The existence of commercial cities in Russia, so far back as the invasion of Rurik, may be accepted as presumptive proof that there were not wanting some regulations to render individuals amenable to the common good. But these were merely the rude precepts of the hunting and agricultural nations matured into a stronger form, and adapted to the wants of the commercial community. When the Scandinavians subjugated the aborigines, the languages, customs, and laws of both fell into still greater confusion by admixture. When each was imperfect, it was unlikely that a forcible intermixture would have improved either, or led to the harmonious union of both. It is to be observed, too, that none of the nations that made up the population possessed written laws; so that whatever notions of legislation they entertained, were constantly liable to the fluctuations of capricious opinion, and were always subject to the interpretation of the strong over the weak. Where there were no records there was but little responsibility, and even that little was diminished by the character of the rulers and the lawlessness of the ruled. The exclusive attention of the princes being of necessity confined to the most effectual methods of preserving their sovereign-

ties, of enlarging their domains, and of exacting tributes, it was natural that the unsystematic and crude usages that prevailed should fall into farther contempt, and, instead of acquiring shape and consistency from experience, become still more oppressive, dark, and indecisive.

It was this monster of incongruities that Yaroslaf cast out; supplying its place with a series of written laws, in which some sacrifices were made to popular customs, but which, on the whole, was an extraordinary boon to a people that, like mariners at sea without a compass, were tossed about in a tumult of uncertainty and perplexity. Had Yaroslaf been a mere soldier, like the majority of his predecessors, he would have employed his talents in the field, and directed the enormous physical means at his command to the purposes of a wild and desolating ambition. But his policy was in advance of the heathen age: it restrained boundless licentiousness, created immunities, protected life and property, bestowed rewards, enacted punishments, established safeguards and facilities for trade, and expounded and confirmed those distinctions of ranks in which a community on a large scale recognises the elements of its permanency. He had the magnanimity to forego vulgar conquests for the higher conquest of prejudices and ancient habits. The people, probably fatigued with the restlessness of their mode of life, and yearning after repose and settlement, rendered now more necessary by the rapid increase of their numbers, received his laws with gratitude.

A short outline of the leading provisions of these laws will form a curious and valuable commentary upon the character of the grand prince, and the actual state of the people at this period (1018).

The first article of the code empowers the friends of a murdered man to take satisfaction upon the murderer; constituting the law as the public avenger only in cases where there are no friends to take their vengeance in kind. This appears to be no better than the reduction

of a barbarous usage into written law; and if so, it proves with what delicacy Yaroslaf set about the task of remodelling the traditional laws, since, in the very first step, he thus legalised a savage custom. If so brutal a self-will did not exist before, then we are to conclude that it was designed as a bonus on the acceptance of a statutory restraint upon other excesses.

In the event of there being no relatives to take the revenge into their own hands, the law goes on to enact that the assassin shall pay into the public treasury a certain fine, according to the rank of his victim. Thus, for the murder of a boyard, or thane of the prince, the mulct was fixed at the highest penalty of eighty grivnas*; for a page of the prince, his cook, or other domestics, for a merchant, for the sword-bearer of a boyard, and for every *free* Russian, without distinction of origin, forty grivnas; for a *woman*, half the usual fine: no fine for killing a slave; but if killed without sufficient cause, the value to be paid to the master: for a serf belonging to a boyard or free Russian, five grivnas to the owner; for the superintendent of a village, an artisan, schoolmaster, or nurse, twelve grivnas; for a female servant, six grivnas to the master, and twelve to the state.

From these penalties a correct estimate may be formed of the principles upon which the social fabric was erected. In all these provisions the rich were favoured above the poor, the strong above the weak. The life of a woman, because her utility in a barbarous community was rated according to its menial value, was fixed at half the worth of a man's, to be proportioned according to her station. The murder of a slave was not visited with any penalty whatever; the exception constituting, in fact, the privilege to kill a slave at pleasure. Slavery was carried to extremity in Russia. Prisoners of war and their posterity were condemned to perpetual slavery; the poverty of the soil, and the

* A copper coin, of the value, as near as we can ascertain, of about 4½d. of our money.

oppression of its lords, forced many to sell their freedom for limited periods; insolvent debtors became slaves by law; and all freemen who married slaves unconditionally, participated in their servitude.

Yet, degrading as these institutions must be considered, it appears that the rights of the person were scrupulously maintained. Thus this code enumerates penalties for striking a blow, describes the different degrees of the offence, and regulates the responsibility accordingly. The distinctions drawn between the different modes of striking are singular, and help to show that, ill as the Russians could appreciate public liberty, they had a jealous sense of that individual respect which, in modern Europe, is called the point of honour. The penalty for striking a blow with the scabbard or handle of a sword, with the fist, a stick, cup, or goblet, was twelve grivnas—equal to the fine for murdering an artisan or a schoolmaster. If the blow was struck with a club, which, we presume, was considered a plebeian weapon, the penalty was only three grivnas. But the most characteristic penalty was that of twelve grivnas for pulling a man by the beard, or knocking out a tooth. The origin of this law may be easily traced to the Goths and Germans, who were rigid in the preservation of their hair, to which they attached extraordinary importance. In the same spirit was the enactment that prohibited the making use of a horse without the permission of the owner, and that visited with imprisonment for life the crime of horse-stealing. This legal protection of the horse is still preserved in the Saxon laws.

The prevailing tendency of the code was to secure to each man his lawful property, and to arm him with the means of protection. Yet it must be remarked as a strange inconsistency, in the midst of this anxiety to erect safeguards round property, that fraudulent debtors were granted a direct escape from liability to consequences. It was enacted, that if one man lent money to another, and the latter denied the loan, the ordeal

should not apply; the oath of the defendant being deemed a sufficient release from the debt. This law was the more unaccountable in a country where the legal interest of money was forty per cent., — a circumstance calculated to increase the motives to dishonesty.

Another enactment makes a distinction between the Varangians and Slavonians, which illustrates the fact that the latter had always been more advanced in civilisation than the former. By this enactment, a Koblegian or a Varangian was compelled to take an oath where such a test was required, but a Slavonian was exempted. It would therefore appear, if the conclusion may be safely ventured upon, that judicial combats, which formed the final appeal when a defendant in a cause acquitted himself in the first instance by a solemn oath, were not adopted amongst the Slavonians, who were satisfied with a public examination of facts, and an adjudication, without the sacred or the physical test. It is sufficient, however, for the great uses of historical inquiry, to know that a difference so remarkable between two branches of the people was recognised and confirmed by law.

One of the most important declarations of the code was that which divided the population into three classes — the nobles, the freemen, and the slaves. Of these three, the slaves alone were left unprotected. The freemen, who were fenced in from the encroachments of the nobles, were composed of the citizens, the farmers, the landholders, and hired servants. They were subclassified into centuries, each of which elected a head, who filled an office equivalent to that of a tribune. The civil magistracy, thus created, had a separate guard of their own, and were placed, in virtue of their office, on an equality with the boyards. The city of Novgorod, which maintained, under a nominal princedom, the spirit of a republic, exhibited these municipal franchises in a more complete form than any of the Russian cities; all of which, however, possessed similar privileges, more or less modified according to their relative importance,

or the circumstances under which their charters were granted. The chief of the Novgorodian republic was a prince of the blood; the title of his office was that of Namestnick. The powers of the prince, at first comprehensive and arbitrary, declined into the executive as the franchises of the citizens came to be extended and enforced. He took no share in the deliberations of the people, nor does it appear that he even possessed a veto upon their decisions. His oath of instalment bound him as the slave rather than the governor of the city; for it pledged him to govern agreeably to the constitution as he found it; to appoint none but Novgorodian magistrates in the provinces, and even these to be previously approved of by the Posadnick, or mayor; to respect strictly the exclusive rights possessed by the citizens sitting in judgment on their own order, of imposing their own taxes, and of carrying on commerce at their own discretion; to interdict his boyards from acquiring landed property within the villages dependent on Novgorod, and to oblige them to travel at their private cost; to discourage emigration; and never to cause a Novgorodian to be arrested for debt. A princedom, accepted on such restrictive conditions, was but the shadow of a sceptre, as the municipal union of the legislative and judicial abundantly proved. The first officer was the Posadnick, or mayor, chosen by election for a limited time; the next was the Tisiatski, or tribune, who was a popular check upon the prince and mayor; and the rest of the functionaries consisted of the senate, the city assembly, and the boyards, all of whom were elective. By the electoral system, the people preserved a constant guard over the fidelity of their representatives in the senate, and their officers of justice; so that, while the three grades propounded by law were kept widely apart, and socially distinguished, the prerogatives of each were rigidly protected against innovation from the other two. All that this little republic required to render its security perfect, was liberty. It was based upon a system of slavery, and sustained its dominion more by fear than

righteousness. Nor was it independent of control, although all its domestic concerns were uninterruptedly transacted within its own confines. It was an appanage of the grand princedom; but on account of its fortunate geographical position on the northern and north-western frontiers, which were distant from the capital,—a circumstance that delegated to Novgorod the defence of those remote boundaries,—it acquired a degree of political importance that preserved it for four centuries against the cupidity of the succession of despots that occupied the throne. The removal of the seat of empire from Kief to Vladimir, and finally to Moscow, by drawing the centre nearer to Novgorod, diminished its power by degress, and finally absorbed it altogether. That a small state, approaching so closely to freedom without being free, and presenting so many features of moral greatness with a substratum of actual slavery, should ever have existed in the Russian empire, or, having existed, should never have asserted its right to the completion of that scheme of government it visibly shadowed forth, is one of those anomalies in the history of man which cannot be traced to their causes.

One of the enactments of the code of Yaroslaf will show what advances had been made towards the segregation of the people into different orders, and how much the government partook, or was likely to partake, of a mixed form, in which a monarchical, an hereditary, and a representative estate were combined. It made the prince the heir at law of every freeman who died without male issue, with the exception of the boyards and officers of the royal guard. By this regulation the prerogative of the crown was rendered paramount, while the hereditary rights of property were preserved unconditionally to the families of the nobles alone. A class of rich patricians was thus formed and protected, to represent, by virtue of birth, the interests of property; while commerce and popular privileges were fully represented in the assembly of the elected senators. The checks and balances of this system were pretty equal; so that, if the

constitution of which these outlines were the elements, had been allowed to accumulate strength and to become consolidated by time, it would at last have resolved itself into a liberal and powerful form; the demi-savage usages with which it was encrusted would have dropped away, and wiser institutions have grown up in their stead.

So clearly were the popular benefits of the laws defined, that the code regulated the maximum demand which the proprietor of the soil might exact from his tenant; and it neither enforced taxation, nor recognised corporal punishment, nor in the composition of a pecuniary mulct admitted any distinction between the Varangians and the Slavonians, who formed the aristocracy and the democracy. The prince neither possessed revenue nor levied taxes. He subsisted on the fines he imposed for infractions of law, on the tributes he received from his estates, on the voluntary offerings of the people, and the produce of such property as had fallen to the private title of the sovereignty. Even the tribute was not compulsory; it was rather a right derived from proscription. The only dependence of the lords of fiefs was in that they were compelled to render military service when required to the grand prince; and it was expected that they should come numerously attended, well armed, and provisioned. The tribute was the mark of conquest, and was not considered to imply taxation.

But while the monarchical principle was thus kept within proscribed limits, the power of the democracy was not sufficiently curbed: over both there was a check, but the hands of the prince were bound too tightly. His dominion was despotic, because he was surrounded by men devoted to his will; but the dominion of the people was boundless, because opinion was only in its rickety infancy, and the resistance to the offending prince lay in the demonstration of physical superiority instead of moral combination. They never hesitated to avail themselves of their numerical advantage. They even carried it to extravagance and

licentiousness; and so much did they exult in their strength, that they regulated the hours at which the sovereign was permitted to enjoy relaxation, punished the obnoxious heads of the church by summary ejectment, and in several instances, taking the charter of law into their own keeping, deposed their princes. The checks, therefore, established in Yaroslaf's wise convention between the government and the constituency were overborne by the rudeness of the times.

That the period had arrived when laws were necessary to the settlement of the empire, was sufficiently testified by the circumstances, external and domestic, in which the people were placed. The adoption of Christianity had partially appeased the old passion for aggression against Constantinople, which, having now become the metropolis of their religion, was regarded with some degree of veneration by the Russians. A war of plunder in Byzantium, therefore, could not be entertained with any prospect of success. The extension of the empire under Vladimir left little to be coveted beyond the frontiers, which spread to the east, north, and south as far as even the wild grasp of the lawless tribes of the forests could embrace. To the west, the Russians had ceased to look for prey, since Boleslas, by his easy conquest of Kief, had demonstrated the strength of Poland. Having acquired as much as they could; and having next, in the absence of warlike expeditions abroad, occupied themselves with ruthless feuds at home, they came at length to consider the necessity of consulting the security of possessions acquired at so much cost, and so often risked by civil broils. This was the time for a code of laws. But unfortunately there still existed too many remains of the barbarian era, to render the introduction of legal restraints a matter easy of accomplishment. The jealousy of Greek superiority survived the admission of the Greek religion. The longing after power still inspired the petty chiefs; and hopeless dreams of larger dominion wherewith to bribe the discontented, and pro-

vide for the hirelings of the state, still troubled the repose of the sovereign. The throne stood in a plain surrounded by forests, from whence issued, as the rage propelled them, hordes of newly reclaimed savages, pressing extraordinary demands, or threatening with ferocious violence the dawning institutions of civilisation. In such a position, it was not only impossible to advance steadily, but to maintain the ground already gained.

Could the character of Yaroslaf, the legislator, have been transmitted through his successors, the good of which he laid the seeds, might have been finally cultivated to maturity. But his wisdom and his virtues died with him. Nor, elevated as he was in moral dignity above the spirit of his countrymen, can it be said that he was free from weaknesses that marred much of the utility of his best measures. One of his earliest errors was the resignation of Novgorod to his son Vladimir, who had no sooner ascended the throne of the republican city, than, under the pretext of seeking satisfaction for the death of a Russian who had been killed in Greece, he carried arms into the Byzantine empire. The folly of this wild attempt was abundantly punished in the sequel; fifteen thousand men were sacrificed on the Grecian plains, and their chief hunted back disgracefully to his own territories. Yet this issue of one family grant did not awaken Yaroslaf to the danger of partitioning the empire. Before his death he divided the whole of Russia amongst his sons; making, however, the younger sons subordinate to the eldest, as grand prince of Kief, and empowering the latter to reduce the others to obedience by force of arms whenever they exhibited a disposition to dispute his authority.

This settlement, enforced with parting admonitions on his death-bed, was considered by Yaroslaf to present a sufficient security against civil commotion and disputes about the succession. But he did not calculate upon the ungovernable lust for power, the jealousy of younger brothers, and the passion for aggrandisement. His in-

junctions were uttered in the amiable confidence of Christianity; they were violated with the indecent impetuosity of the barbarian nature.

With the death of Yaroslaf, and the division of the empire, a new period of darkness and misrule began. The character of the legislator, which influenced his own time, was speedily absorbed in the general confusion. Yaroslaf's name was held in reverence, but the memory of his excellence did not awe the multitudes that, upon his decease, sprang from their retirement to revive the disastrous glories of domestic warfare. Much as he had done for the extension of Christianity, he had failed in establishing it in the hearts of the people. He was an able theologian, and well acquainted with the church ordinances, agenda, and other books of the Greek religion, many of which he caused to be translated into the Russian language, and distributed in copies over the country. So strong an interest did he take in the cultivation of the doctrines of the church, that he established a metropolitan at Kief, in order to relieve the Russian people and their priests from the inconveniences attending the residence of the ecclesiastical head at Constantinople, and also with a desire to provide for the more prompt and certain dissemination of the principles of faith. But the value of all these exertions expired with their author. He did much to raise the fame and consolidate the resources of the empire; but the last act of his political career, by which he cut away the cord that bound the rods, had the effect of neutralising all the benefits he meditated to accomplish, as well as those that he actually effected, for his country. His reign was followed by a period of savage anarchy that might be said to have resolved the half-civilised world into its original elements.

CHAP. VI.

ISIASLAF I. — DEPOSED BY UCHESLAF. — INTERFERENCE OF POLAND, AND RESTORATION OF THE GRAND PRINCE. — HE IS AGAIN EXPELLED, AND AGAIN REINSTATED BY POLAND. — DEATH OF ISIASLAF. — THE ORDER OF SUCCESSION CHANGED. — VSEVOLOD ASCENDS THE THRONE. — THE DECLINE OF KIEF. — INDEPENDENCE OF THE NOVGORODIANS. — VLADIMIR MONOMACHUS HEADS THE ARMY. — DEATH OF VSEVOLOD. — VLADIMIR REFUSES THE THRONE. — THE ORDER OF SUCCESSION STILL PRESERVED IN THE ELDER BRANCH.

ISIASLAF I., the eldest of Yaroslaf's five sons, succeeded to the throne of Kief. The fatal effects of divided policy and unnatural contests were never more completely exhibited than in the reign and misfortunes of this prince. He filled a throne paramount by injunction, but too weak to assert its sovereignty, and in the sanguinary struggles for supremacy that occupied his life, he was obliged to call in the assistance of foreign aid on two memorable occasions. This introduction of foreign soldiery prepared the way for the ultimate overthrow of the seat of Russian authority. Kief, often the scene of contention and the object of strife, could not hope to escape unscathed through such a succession of storms.

Ucheslaf, prince of Polotsk, was the first of the rebellious brothers to unfurl his standard against the grand prince. Kief was so debilitated by the dispersion of a great part of its military inhabitants in the trains of the chiefs of the appanages, and by the curtailment of its own immediate territories, that it soon fell before the well-organised troops of the insurgent prince. Isiaslaf was driven from his throne, and forced to throw himself upon the friendly services of Boleslas II., surnamed the Bold, grand-duke of Poland. He could not

have confided his cause to a more experienced or successful warrior, nor to one who was moved to champion it by so many motives. Boleslas followed the pursuit of war for the sake of conquest. His undertakings were of a daring description, and he seemed to succeed more by the terror of precipitancy and dauntless courage than by foresight or skill. He ardently desired to repossess Poland of those tracts which had been wrested from her by the Russian princes, while, as a lover of legitimacy, he affected zeal on behalf of the deposed prince. "I am obliged to succour that prince," he said, "by the blood which unites us, and by the pity which is so justly due to his misfortunes. Unfortunate princes are more to be commiserated than ordinary mortals. If calamities must necessarily exist upon earth, they should not be allowed to affect such as are exalted for the happiness of others."

At the head of a numerous and valiant army he marched into Russia. The two armies met within a few leagues of the capital. The sight of the martial armament of the Poles struck terror to the heart of Ucheslaf. He in vain endeavoured to summon courage for the approaching conflict, and at last, overcome by his fears, he fled privately from his tent. But a still greater fear, the fear that none but the pusillanimous know, arrested his flight. He feared the disgrace of cowardice and the revenge of his followers, and, inspired by a desperate resolution, he returned. Again the panic seized upon him, and, gazing once more on the undaunted foe, he fled for the last time in dismay. His people, thus deprived of a leader and a purpose, dispersed, and left the course to Kief open to the victorious Poles, who quickly invested the city, which yielded to the authority of Isiaslaf. Polotsk also capitulated, but Ucheslaf escaped. Boleslas and his guards now gave way to the dissipation which prevailed amongst the Russians, and while they remained as guests of the prince, the city continued to present a picture of immorality and profligacy. They were soon called into

Hungary, and Isiaslaf was left in possession of his dominions.

But this possession was neither peaceful nor secure. Civil wars broke out over the whole empire. The brothers, and their numerous kindred, were every where up in arms, asserting imaginary claims, or prosecuting predatory adventures. The spirit of dissension, of arbitrary exaction, of spoliation and rivalry was abroad, and shook a pestilence over the land. Isiaslaf struggled against this unnatural state of things for seven years; but in 1075, his better fortune deserted him, and he was again expelled from Kief by Usevolod, a prince of one of the tributary fiefs. Thus struck down from his inheritance, and banished, by the invasion of a ferocious enemy, he applied for aid to Henry IV., and even endeavoured to bribe that monarch by costly presents. His gifts failing, the weak prince proposed to accept the restoration of the Kievian throne as a fief, of which offer Henry would doubtless have availed himself, but that he was not provided with troops to carry the expedition into effect. He endeavoured, however, to negotiate with Usevolod, through an ambassador whom he despatched to his court; but diplomacy had no influence upon the dispositions of that prince. In this dilemma, Isiaslaf, in despair, besought the interference of the pope, who at that period was considered by enslaved Europe as the dispenser of all kingdoms within the range of heaven and earth. The pope readily caught at the opportunity of annexing Russia to his catalogue of grants*, expecting that Isiaslaf would, on regaining

* The negotiations that took place, on this occasion, between Gregory VIII. and Isiaslaf are involved in some uncertainty; but in a letter of the former, which is still extant, we find a tolerably characteristic specimen of the spirit that governed the holy offices of the popedom on behalf of dismantled principalities. It is almost impossible to conceive a more arrogant tone of patronage than the following passage displays: — "Your son, being at Rome, to adore the relics of the apostles, has declared to us his desire of receiving from us the sovereignty of Russia, as a present from the apostle St. Peter; and by taking the oath of fealty to us, he has certified to us that you concurred with him in this request. *We have thought fit to condescend to his petition, by granting him your dominions, after your decease, on behalf of St. Peter.*" The popes literally gave away every kingdom but the kingdom of heaven, and that they sold in common to every body who could afford to purchase it!

his throne, forswear the patriarch of Constantinople, and bow to the supremacy of the clotted tiara of Rome. His holiness accordingly instructed his well-beloved the duke of Poland to support Isiaslaf to the utmost, and Boleslas thus became again engaged in the wars of Russia. But the second service of the Pole was to be purchased at an extravagant price. Boleslas, on undertaking to reinstate the Russian prince, secretly determined to render the country tributary to Poland, and commenced his design by the preliminary subjugation of the whole of Volhynia. Having overrun a large surface of country in the first steps of his progress, he next advanced upon Kief. He was met near the city by the forces of Usevolod, and in the tremendous battle that ensued, he nearly annihilated the army of the usurper. But the city remained yet to be subdued, and as it was strongly garrisoned and amply provisioned, he was obliged to prepare for a tedious siege. His army lay encamped before the walls, beyond which there appeared hardly any hope of penetrating. For a long time the place set his power at defiance, and he might have been compelled to draw off his men in the end, had not a contagious fever broken out amongst the inhabitants, and forced them to throw open their gates for the egress of the terrified citizens. The opportunity was not lost upon Boleslas. He poured in just as the plague had exhausted its virulence; and the Kievians, no longer able to resist, submitted to his arms. This second restoration terminated the reverses of the life of Isiaslaf. Boleslas having established him on his throne, is said by the Polish historians to have exacted the payment of a nominal tribute, instead of incorporating the territories of Kief and its dependent provinces with his own dominions; thus leaving behind him, on his departure, an ally and friend, instead of a slave and enemy panting for freedom.

The stay of Boleslas and his nobles in Kief was marked by the most abandoned excesses. They plunged into all the vices of that populous city, in a spirit of

such utter recklessness, that public business was for a time paralysed, and the functions of government suspended. Isiaslaf, anxious to render the sojourn of his friend as agreeable as possible, willingly relaxed all the severities of state observance, and gave way before the impetuous desires of the Poles. In this season of festivity and debauchery, the very lowest sources of indulgence were cultivated; and to such a depth of sensuality did Boleslas at last carry his enjoyments, that Isiaslaf, in order to tempt him one day from his pernicious pleasures, offered him as many marks of gold as his horse could take steps from his palace to the royal residence, if he would visit him. The distance is said to have been so great as to make the amount a magnificent bribe. But Boleslas and his followers were soon recalled to Poland (which they appeared to have forgotten, and from which they had been absent, including an expedition they had made to Hungary, seven years) by a report of the infidelity of their wives at home, who, during their long widowhood, had exercised their tastes in the selection of new partners.

The reign of Isiaslaf was one unbroken series of dissensions. The vast dominion that Yaroslaf had bound up in his own person, was now rapidly falling to pieces under the conflict of divided governments. The princes of the dependent appanages broke out into the commission of the most fatal excesses, and many by degrees separated themselves from the grand princedom, which they refused to acknowledge. These direful contentions, in which the strength of the country was expended, encouraged the incursions of all the robber tribes and powerful nations that lay on the borders. The Poles, Hungarians, and Tartars from time to time descended upon the adjacent principalities, and devastated them. New treaties were entered into to ensure future protection; but these were violated with impunity, and in the midst of the calamities that approached them from afar, the native princes usurped, wherever they could, the possessions of their kindred, superadding to the hor-

rors of war the guilt of treachery and rapine. The principle of decomposition was now so universally promoted by the weakness and wickedness of all the petty rulers and their followers, that it was not surprising it should assume a more tangible form, and penetrate to the paramount throne, on the death of Isiaslaf.

Hitherto the succession to the grand princedom of Kief was in the eldest son. The distant fiefs were divided amongst the junior branches, or, as we have seen in some of the earlier instances of partition, delegated to favourite bayards, or able military leaders. So long as the law of hereditary succession was observed, some degree of order was ensured, and some respect maintained towards the office of the grand prince. But the novelties and intrigues that were now spreading over the face of Russia, seem to have disturbed all known and accepted notions of government. The most unexpected and unparalleled cases of deposition and usurpation took place of the ordinary and accustomed order of things; and, as these changes were not accompanied by any immediate or prospective benefits, but were merely carried, in the height of popular frenzy, to gratify the wild desires of temporary passion, their influence upon the minds of the population was more electrical and complete. The rage for overturning settled institutions communicated with rapidity from city to city. The people eagerly caught the flame of revolution, and it at last reached the heart of the capital. Thus the barbarous supremacy of brute force, engendered on the plains, and madly invoked in the haunts of trade and commerce, was now manifested at Kief, and the succession to the throne was reversed. This outrage was consummated in the person of Vsevolod, the brother of Isiaslaf, who, with the consent of the children of the deceased prince, mounted the throne.

Except in the case of Oleg, where a regency was prolonged by common sufferance beyond the infancy of his ward, there was no precedent for this wilful alteration in the succession. But the regency of Oleg did not ul-

timately interfere with the inheritance, nor did it offend against the principle of primogenial succession by the establishment of a new heirship. Vsevolod, on the contrary, fixed the order of succession from brother to brother as the law of the land; thus destroying, by ordinance as well as act, the original law which he was the first to violate.

The pretences under which this alteration was effected in the sovereignty were very slight, but admirably adapted to the prejudices of a patriarchal age. The veneration in which all the ancient nations held the elders of the reigning stock amounted almost to superstition. An excessive and timid regard for the first form of government, however necessity might have modified their own, led them to receive with reverence any practical return to that rude and simple system by which wisdom, and the right divine, were supposed to reside in the oldest member of the family that ruled the community. By addressing this latent prejudice, and turning it adroitly to his own account, which was the more easily accomplished as the voice of disaffection rose around the walls of the city, Vsevolod succeeded in gaining over to his views the suffrages of the people; and even in persuading the sons of Isiaslaf, that the new mode of succession was an actual restoration of an old and revered custom. The attachment of the Russians to this primitive institution was exhibited in their devotion to the family of Rurik, the founder of the empire; from amongst whose descendants they at all times chose their princes, in preference to any other race of men.

The period of Vsevolod's accession to the throne, 1084, was particularly distinguished by the increasing revolutions that prevailed in the principalities. The Hungarians invaded some of the remote appanages, while other fiefs were assailed by the Polovtzy, a race of predatory Tartars. The princedom of Kief was gradually melting under the hands of its limited sovereigns, partly in consequence of the increasing power of other prin-

cipalities, some of which claimed all the honours of supremacy, and partly because the discontent caught from the surrounding atmosphere of insurrection, deprived the throne of that support which was required for its proper maintenance. In the same proportion as Kief declined, Novgorod prospered. The position of the latter, in addition to the superiority of its form of government, kept it comparatively safe from the mutability that attended its struggling rivals; and so independent did it become of the necessity of strife for the sake of acquisition, that it was supposed, and not without cause, that it would separate itself altogether from the empire, and form itself into a distinct republic, tributary, probably, to Sweden. A proof of the spirit of the people, carried, perhaps, to a criminal excess, may be cited in the fact, that within the space of 100 years they had a succession of thirty-four princes, many of whom were expelled for neglecting their duties, and others deposed for attempting to curb the public liberty. The moment a disposition was manifested on the part of the prince to enlarge his prerogatives, the people met in a body, and addressed to him a remonstrance to abandon his designs, or an injunction, on pain of immediate punishment, to surrender the sceptre into their hands. A document of the latter kind, which is preserved in one of the chronicles, runs thus:—"Why do you, prince of Novgorod, act unjustly? You keep a great number of hawks and falcons; you keep a large pack of hounds; and you have deprived us of the rivers in which we used to fish. We can no longer submit to this tyranny: get away from us, therefore, in the name of God. When you are gone, we shall provide ourselves with another prince." The prince to whom this notice was addressed submitted, and promised to do better for the future; but it was too late; the people had taken their resolution, and so they rejected him in disregard of his professions. The Novgorodians even went so far, on one occasion, as to refuse obedience to the grand prince, who procured the intercession of the metropo-

litan; and the language of that prelate's letter will show that the church itself bowed to the bold republicans. "The grand prince," wrote the metropolitan, "has acted wrong towards you: but he repents it, implores of you to forgive him, and will behave better in future. I guarantee myself for his conduct, and beseech of you to receive him with honour and dignity." The people who could force this concession from their rulers, must have advanced far towards a state of political freedom: but they wanted a controlling judgment to appropriate and regulate the advantages of their independence.

The opening of Vsevolod's reign was a crisis of difficulty. His son, Vladimir Monomachus, a man afterwards destined to a glorious immortality in the annals of his country, was sent into some of the distant territories to quell the ferocious Polovtzy, who, in the disorderly rage of the savage nature, carried destruction with them wherever they directed their course. In these desultory campaigns, Vladimir was usually victorious, and his name became a word of terror among the tribes of the Tartar invaders. Valiant in the field, and wise in council, he extorted even from the jealous heirs and possessors of the inferior appanages a measure of reluctant admiration. He alone stood calmly amidst the shock and conflict of the times; and perhaps the grandeur of his character created as many enemies as the singular disinterestedness with which he advanced to the defence of the unprotected, unmoved by any motives of personal ambition, and labouring only for the common good of the nation. One blot alone stained his reputation. The Polovtzy had obtained from him a treaty, unfavorable to his objects. In defiance of this treaty they committed renewed acts of depredation, and Vladimir, releasing himself from his good faith towards them, turned their own weapon of treachery against themselves. But his treachery was directed against those who never observed any conditions of honour; and he betrayed none but those who were traitors in all the relations of life.

Vsevolod reigned for nine years. The record of his actions is dumb. It is an agitated canvass, in which the observer can discern nothing more than the chaos of the elements, with a single star of promise glittering distantly in the person of the prince. In 1093, Vsevolod died in the arms of Vladimir Monomachus, bequeathing to him the throne of Kief, in contravention of the very rule of succession he had himself laid down.

The citizens, who had long acknowledged in Vladimir the presence of the natural qualities of authority, urged upon his acceptance the dying bequest of his father; but Vladimir, inspired by a high sense of rectitude, declined the honour, alleging that it would violate the established order of succession, which, by right, conferred the throne upon his cousin Sviatopolk. "His father," exclaimed Vladimir, "was my father's senior, and reigned first in the capital. I wish to preserve Russia from the horrors of a civil war." The greatness of Vladimir's mind, which cast away all private good in the consideration of the national prosperity, may be estimated by the double motives of justice and love of country, that induced him to forego the proffered sceptre.

Thus, the succession which was so recently regulated to devolve from one brother upon another, was now transferred from uncle to nephew, recognising in this transference the elder branch, in its last degree of relationship, over the more immediate link of consanguinity. This strange right of heirship produced in the end the most injurious consequences. It rendered the reigning prince indifferent to the conservation of a territory which was to pass out of his own hands into those of another family-branch, leaving his children without an inheritance; and he was therefore prompted to parcel out the domain of the crown during his lifetime amongst his offspring, in order to provide for their future establishment, and weaken the means of the princedom which they were not allowed to inherit, and which might, one day or another, be turned against

them. The system of transfer induced by the new order of succession also reduced the influence and power of each succeeding prince, who, when he came to the throne, found the principality broken up into fragments by the provisional arrangements of his predecessor; while the system of government itself was constantly in a state of fluctuation and disorder, from the want of continuity in movement and policy. The princes upon whom the sceptre devolved, under this dispensation, were usually strangers to Kief, and were drawn to their high office from distant and inferior principalities. They carried with them a number of followers, and, as they held the throne only for life, and as its honours and emoluments could not descend to their natural heirs, they made the best use of their opportunities to aggrandise their own kindred and provide for their boyards. An easier course of decline could scarcely be imagined for any government; but it had an especial tendency to destruction in one which was placed in such peculiar difficulties as those by which Kief was surrounded. These observations, of course, anticipate the progress of events; but this appears the proper place to mark the folly upon which they bear.

CHAP. VII.

KIEF UNDER SVIATOPOLK. — CONGRESS OF THE TRIBUTARY PRINCES. — ASCENDANCY OF VLADIMIR MONOMACHUS. — HE INCURS THE JEALOUSY OF HIS KINSMEN. — THE DISSENSIONS OF THE PRINCES TERMINATED. — DEATH OF SVIATOPOLK. — MASSACRE OF THE JEWS. — VLADIMIR MONOMACHUS CALLED TO THE THRONE.

IT would be a useless labour to trace in detail the numerous and ever-increasing evils to which these circumstances reduced Russia, and more especially Kief. Had Kief been a less distinguished city, and had it not been invested with so much political importance and responsibility as the capital of the empire, its advantageous position would have preserved it probably unimpaired in the shock of contending chiefs. But its destiny was high and ambitious, and its overthrow partook of the splendour that marked its existence. Throughout the whole period of anarchy that disturbed the peace and arrested the improvement of the tributary fiefs, the sovereign authority, although actually reduced to a shadow, was still recognised and honoured even by the factions who secretly plotted against its power. The show of respect for the supremacy of the grand prince was maintained by the discontented, with the double view of concealing their treacherous projects from the sovereign, as well as from each other. This cautious expediency was thus the means of favouring each new scheme of disaffection until it became ripe for action. The princes were as jealous of each other as of the supreme throne: and the fear of throwing fresh resources open to the use of their rivals and enemies, frequently intercepted, and sometimes altogether neutralised, their designs. The form of government through which the rule of Kief was observed, resembled that of a congress

in all its material features. It possessed the external influence and internal constitution of the earliest parliament of a feudal people. The princes of the several appanages were convoked to a general assembly whenever any important affairs, which concerned the empire at large, or affected one of the members of the reigning family, and through him the distribution of patronage, or the punishment of high offences, were to be discussed. To this assembly, if the circumstances were serious, or if any commotion or resistance were expected to result from the decision, the princes came armed, attended by their boyards, who loitered outside the entrance to the tent or council chamber where the meeting was held. Beyond this court there was no appeal, except the appeal to arms. The princes were themselves amenable to the verdicts of their peers, and could not refuse to obey them without at the same time uttering a declaration of warlike recusancy.

A system, under which a legal and legislative authority was bestowed upon the chiefs of the principalities, was obviously calculated for extension. If the sovereign power had been cemented by just laws, and the people inspired by the spirit of civilisation, this system must have grown up into the representative form of government; for the convocation of the chiefs of the people to decide upon questions common to all, or incidental to the supreme authority, was the dawn of a liberal and adaptive theory of legislation, which time and experience must have finally reduced to practice. But the constant partitions and revolutions, by which new and incompatible rights were asserted, and a succession of claims preserved, prevented the possibility of gradual amelioration and consolidation. If the genius of one sovereign amended the character of his age, the good he achieved was cast down by the ignorance or brutality of his successor; and in these transitions the moral nature of the people suffered rapid degradation. The uncertainty of domestic privileges, the incessant change of masters, and the fluctuations in the prevailing tone

of policy, were antagonist to the settlement of ascertained principles, so that even the truths that sprang from the misfortunes of the state failed to fortify it with wisdom.

Vladimir Monomachus, whose rigid sense of honour kept him from the throne, was nevertheless the ascendant star of the government throughout the imbecile reign of Sviatopolk, which lasted through a period of twenty years. He was so admirably adapted to the difficulties of the period, that although he remained a faithful vassal to the grand prince, his predominant mind swayed the proceedings of the legislature, and saved the empire from ruin. Many of the tributary princes were better appointed than Sviatopolk, whose guard was composed of only 800 warriors. Yet so short-sighted and ill-tempered was this monarch that he frequently embroiled himself in foolish contests and imprudent quarrels, out of which he seldom could have escaped with safety but for the timely and disinterested aid of Vladimir. In vain did that patriotic prince advise the misguided sovereign. The rage of a false ambition filled his breast: he was deaf to remonstrance, and incapable of appreciating the advantages of peace. Thus Vladimir, in his earnest attempts to repress the follies of the grand prince, or to remedy them when committed, rendered himself an object of suspicion and hatred to some of his brother chiefs, amongst whom the most formidable was his kinsman, the sanguinary Oleg.

In 1097, the fourth year of the reign of Sviatopolk, a congress for the arrangement and settlement of the appanages was held at Kief. At that congress Oleg and his brother David were apportioned certain shares of territory, with which they professed to be satisfied, confirming their allegiance, as was usual, by an oath sworn on the cross. That oath, however, was violated by the intrigues and treacheries of their whole lives. They asserted flagitious claims to several principalities, and demanded at different periods increased immunities; and as these nefarious demands were refused by the so-

vereign, or by the assembly of the princes, they sought to enforce them by calling in the assistance of the roving Polovtzy. In these unnatural contentions, Russia was laid open to the incursions of bands of robbers, merely to gratify the appetite for aggrandisement of a couple of unprincipled leaders. In the resistance to these demands at the point of the sword, Vladimir had rendered himself conspicuous, and earned by the constancy of his zeal in the public cause the untiring malice of his faithless relatives. Nor was that malice ineffectual in its efforts. Oleg succeeded in wresting from Vladimir the appanage of Tchernigof, which, supported by false statements, he claimed as his inheritance. But even this increase of territory did not satisfy the rapacity of the rebellious brothers. David, who had pledged himself to abide the terms of a peace that had been fixed by treaty at a congress of the princes, broke out into renewed excesses; circulated the most scandalous libels upon the character of Vladimir; and, as if to force the contest between right and might to a speedy issue, committed the atrocity of tearing out the eyes of one of his kinsmen whose appanage he coveted.

Semi-barbarous as were many of the usages of personal redress amongst the Russians, this crime, common in Greece, had been hitherto unknown to them; and it had the effect of startling the minds of the princes so completely, that they immediately convoked a council, before which David was required to state the grievances under which, it was presumed, he imagined himself to suffer. Here the calm and dignified bearing of Vladimir was victorious over his depraved enemy. "Thou pretendest," exclaimed the congress, "that thou hast just cause for complaint. What is it? Thou art now face to face, and foot to foot, before thy brothers. Speak: which of us dost thou accuse?" David, abashed by the abrupt solemnity of the question, remained silent; and the princes, leaving the tent one by one, mounted their horses, and proceeded to a short distance to hold another assembly. After the second conference, at which

every prince who assisted was completely armed, the meeting broke up, and its members severally departed to consult their boyards. On the close of their proceedings, which were conducted in a remarkable tone of deliberation, David was cast out from the fraternity, and deprived of his princedom. But such was the tenderness shown to the descendants of Rurik, that, although David's offence filled the people with horror and disgust, the chiefs, when the sentence of expulsion from his rank had been passed upon him, contributed amongst themselves an abundant income for his support, conferring upon him the tributes of four towns, and the sum of 400 grivnas.

It is a curious trait in the character of the laws that prevailed at this time amongst the Russians, that the criminal code did not enact the punishment of death. Vladimir the Great, when he embraced Christianity, abolished the sanguinary portion of the Russian laws, which was restored by Yaroslaf, and subsequently suppressed again by Isiaslaf. It is not easy to account for the inconsistencies that attach to the early schemes of legislation amongst a people that slowly advance towards civilisation; nor can the strange mixture of wisdom and weakness, of toleration and despotism which they present, be accounted for except upon the simple principle that the precepts of the original state of nature (in which wants were few, and the necessary guards against injuries committed upon rights, personal and acquired, still fewer), become strained to the economy of the social state only in proportion to the knowledge and luxurious improvements of the people. Knowledge, in this sense, is not that accumulation of precedents which, carefully investigated, lead to sound conclusions; but the knowledge of new wants, new desires, fresh means of accomplishment, and remote objects of acquirement. With this sort of knowledge, which springs up dimly in the twilight between the self-will of the savage life and the unassisted reason of infant civilisation, comes a train of inventions, that procure the sensual luxuries of the pro-

jectors. Thus, as men emerge from the mere individual existence into the condition of communities, forming classes, and exercising distinctions unknown before, the plain moral truths that were the first lights in the desert grow gradually pale in the glare of novel and brilliant fallacies; until, arriving at the highest point of the fictitious state of being, they become lost altogether. It is at the point of transition that we find bold and natural truths mingled with false theories. The inconsistencies of the Russian code, if code it might be called, were but the inevitable produce of the incongruous circumstances of the country. The struggle was between the elementary principles or primal laws of nature, and the rudely developed doctrines of the political constitution. The admission of irreconcileable parts from both to make up a clumsy whole, was a compromise to each for the sacrifice of the ascendancy.

The dissensions which were generated by Oleg and David at last terminated in the death of the former, and the wars in which he had engaged the armies of Kief ceased. The Poles and Polovtzy retired from the borders, and peace was about to be restored; but the death of Sviatopolk, which happened in 1113, produced fresh disorders that more particularly affected the repose of the grand principality. The inhabitants fell into confusion, and out of slight misunderstandings that had previously arisen, they conceived a design to massacre the Jews, who formed a numerous party in the city under the ban of that odium, which in those times was even more fierce and vindictive than in the later stages of Christianity. In the midst of this clamour, Vladimir Monomachus was appealed to for succour and advice. The people, perceiving the disasters that threatened them on all hands, called him unanimously to the throne. The citizens held a general and solemn assembly, at which their peculiar situation was discussed, and which closed in the common determination to place the sceptre at the feet of the wise prince, who through the two preceding reigns had been reverenced as the tutelary

genius of the country. But even this call, universal and flattering as it was, Vladimir felt it to be his duty to decline. He declared that the decision of the meeting was not valid in law, that the citizens had no right to reverse the order of succession, and that the hereditary title to the throne was vested in the son of Oleg, whose claim he could not consent to sacrifice even to the popular voice. This resolution was taken with determination, and expressed with energy; and the Kievans, finding that their entreaties and remonstrances were fruitless, revolted against the law, and resolutely refused to acknowledge a sovereignty opposed to that of their own election. The city was now reduced to anarchy, and the public institutions were disorganised. Vladimir, whose virtue could not be subdued by any interests but those of his country, was conquered by the perils that hung over the people. He saw that obstinacy on behalf of an unpopular law would be treason to the commonweal, and, while he resisted the principle that offered violence to the order of succession so long as resistance was unattended with danger, he yielded to the higher principle that appealed to his love of order and public security. He accepted the throne, and speedily restored confidence by the expulsion of the Jews, whose retreat, however, he covered and protected.

CHAP. VIII.

REIGN OF VLADIMIR. — HE UNITES THE PRINCES. — HIS GREAT POPULARITY. — HIS DEATH. — HIS DYING TESTAMENT. — ANARCHY SPRINGS UP AFRESH. — DESOLATION OF THE GRAND PRINCIPALITY. — IT IS SEIZED BY IGOR OF SUZDAL. — HIS DEATH. — NEW DISSENSIONS. — ANDREW OF SUZDAL WITHDRAWS. — HE ABOLISHES THE SYSTEM OF PARTITION. — STRENGTHENS HIS OWN PRINCIPALITY. — HE MAKES WAR ON NOVGOROD, AND IS DEFEATED. — HE DESCENDS UPON KIFF, OVERTHROWS IT, AND TRANSFERS THE SEAT OF EMPIRE TO THE CITY OF VLADIMIR. — NOVGOROD SUBMITS TO HIS POLICY. — UNION OF THE PETTY CHIEFS. — ASSASSINATION OF ANDREW. — IMBECILITY OF HIS SUCCESSORS. — GENERAL DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE.

Called to the throne by the affection of the people, Vladimir filled it with honour. The strength and patriotism of his character influenced the conduct of the majority of the princes; and he was enabled, by the judicious exercise of his personal control, to supersede the civil wars in which the arms of the country were recklessly engaged, and to unite the lords of the appanages in a common union against external enemies. This was a work of time and difficulty. There were many jealousies to be appeased, and many claims to be satisfied, before any approach could be made towards a co-operation for the general interests. The reign of Vladimir was, therefore, less marked by striking events than might be expected from the vigour and earnestness of his proceedings; but the task of quelling the disorderly passions and restoring comparative repose to the empire, although not of a dazzling nature, was the most useful and laudable in which he could be engaged. The esteem in which he was held was not confined to his immediate dominions: it spread to other courts, and elicited from the Grecian emperor a singular testi-

mony of regard. That sovereign, recognising in Vladimir a greatness of mind worthy of the noblest station, sent him the ensigns of the imperial dignity, as a token that he considered him his equal. These ensigns, consisting of a golden tiara of Greek workmanship, set with gems, and crowned with a cross, a sceptre of gold, an imperial mound, and other costly articles, were carefully preserved in the museum and armoury of Moscow.

Vladimir reigned for twelve years. Previously to his death, which took place in 1125, after having ameliorated the laws, softening their undue rigour, and adding fresh enactments to meet exigencies that were before unprovided for, he left a death-bed admonition to his children, which, as it traces the moral principles upon which he acted, and is in itself curious as an illustration, is worthy of attention.

"My dear children," said he, "praise God and love men; for it is neither fasting, nor solitude, nor monastic vows, that can give you eternal life; — it is beneficence alone."

In this first clause, we perceive a spirit far advanced beyond the superstition of the age. Vladimir might have been a reformer of the church, had he been sur-surrounded by favourable circumstances. It will be remembered that this repudiation of the abuses and vanities of a religion deformed by human arts, was delivered in 1125, which was 358 years before the birth of Luther.

"Be fathers to the orphan; be yourselves judges for the widow. Put to death neither the innocent nor the guilty, for nothing is more sacred than the life and soul of a christian.

"Keep not the priests at a distance from you; do good to them, that they may offer up prayers to God for you.

"Violate not the oath which you have sworn on the cross. My brothers said to me, 'Assist us to expel the sons of Rotislaf, and seize upon their provinces, or re-

nounce our alliance.' But I answered, 'I cannot forget that I have kissed the cross.'

"Bear in mind that a man ought to be always employed: look carefully into your domestic concerns, and fly from drunkenness and debauchery.

"Love your wives, but do not suffer them to have any power over you.

"Endeavour constantly to obtain knowledge. Without having quitted his palace, my father spoke five languages,— a thing which wins for us the admiration of foreigners.

"In war be vigilant; be an example to your boyards. Never retire to rest until you have posted your guards. Never take off your arms while you are within reach of the enemy. And, to avoid being surprised, always be early on horseback.

"When you travel through your provinces, do not allow your attendants to do the least injury to the inhabitants. Entertain always at your own expense the master of the house in which you take up your abode.

"If you find yourself affected by any ailment, make three prostrations to the ground before the Lord; and never let the sun find you in bed. At the dawn of day, my father, and the virtuous men by whom he was surrounded, did thus: They glorified the Lord. They then seated themselves to deliberate, or to administer justice to the people, or they went to the chase; and in the middle of the day they slept; which God permits to man, as well as to the beasts and birds.

"For my part, I accustomed myself to do every thing that I might have ordered my servants to do. Night and day, summer and winter, I was perpetually moving about. I wished to see every thing with my own eyes. Never did I abandon the poor or the widow to the oppressions of the powerful. I made it my duty to inspect the churches and the sacred ceremonies o religion, as well as the management of my property, my stables, and the vultures and hawks of my hunting establishment.

"I have made eighty-three campaigns and many expeditions. I concluded nineteen treaties with the Polovtzy. I took captive one hundred of their princes, whom I set free again; and I put two hundred of them to death, by throwing them into rivers.

"No one has ever travelled more rapidly than I have done. Setting out in the morning from Tchernigof, I have arrived at Kief before the hour of vespers.

"In my youth, what falls from my horse did I not experience! wounding my feet and my hands, and breaking my head against trees. But the Lord watched over me.

"In hunting, amidst the thickest forests, how many times have I myself caught wild horses, and bound them together! How many times have I been thrown down by buffaloes, wounded by the antlers of stags, and trodden under the feet of elks! A furious wild boar rent my sword from my baldrick: my saddle was torn to pieces by a bear: this terrible beast rushed upon my courser, whom he threw down upon me. But the Lord protected me.

"O my children, fear neither death nor wild beasts. Trust in Providence; it far surpasses all human precautions."

This dying declaration of faith in the goodness of the Creator, of reliance upon integrity, and of the motives towards excellence, shows in how remarkable a degree Vladimir Monomachus was superior to his contemporaries. There is in this curious document a slight bearing towards the weaknesses of the times, exhibited in his tenderness of the priests; but the magnanimity and disinterestedness of its general maxims, and its admonition to vigilance, temperance, and regularity, are worthy of a more enlightened era, and deserve to be commemorated.

The death of Vladimir was the signal for the renewal of those scenes of outrage and dismemberment which were suspended during his reign. The grand principality was the ostensible excuse for these excesses. The

descendants of Oleg on the one hand, and those of Vladimir on the other, contended for the vacant throne. The people either acted as fanatics in the strife, or as mere spectators of the unnatural desolation of their provinces. All the princes armed; and in the furious carnage that flooded the streets of Kief with blood for many years, the throne was alternately seized like a standard in battle, by one or another, and as frequently rescued and assumed by the next fortunate chief. In the course of thirty-two years, eleven princes mounted the throne, each holding his insecure sceptre only until some one more powerful than himself started up to snatch it from his grasp.

At last, towards the middle of the twelfth century, the grand principality was nearly reduced to the city of Kief. The neighbouring provinces and agricultural domains were wasted by fire and sword, and became the spoil of numerous princes. Yet, although the supreme authority was dwindled to the empty name, there was no cessation of avidity on the part of the rapacious chiefs to possess it; in the wild hope, no doubt, of restoring it to the real dignity of which it now was but the mockery. It had so long been the metropolis of their religion, and the source from whence flowed whatever civilisation might have descended upon the people, that even in its decay it was reverenced by the superstitious, long after it had ceased to be embellished by the virtues of the people.

But the doom of this ancient city was at hand. It had lasted through many conflicts, and had witnessed countless revolutions; but it could not sustain itself in its naked majesty, denuded of the estates by which it had formerly been encompassed and protected. In the contest for supremacy between the descendants of Vladimir and Oleg, the nomadic tribes of the south were called in to assist the attempts of the latter, while the former boldly relied upon the suffrages of the people, and the arms of the friendly Hungarians. The country suffered equally from both: and while the

good or the evil principle — the popular or the unpopular candidate of the hour — triumphed, the effects were equally desolating and disastrous.

At length, one prince rose through the chaos and secured the supremacy. This was Igor, the prince of Suzdal, a mighty territory that lay in the centre of Russia. He possessed the most extensive and powerful of all the appanages; his dominion including all that space that lay under the sub-governments of Yaroslaf, Kostroma, Vladimir, Moscow, and a part of Novgorod, Twer, Nigni Novgorod, Sula, and Kaluga. Fired by desires suggested by the importance of his territory, Igor fixed his eyes upon the sovereign throne, and even indulged in the hope that he should succeed in reducing it to order. His own possessions he regarded merely as the means of advancement. He considered his central Russia as a place of banishment; complained of inclement seasons, trackless forests, uncultured deserts, and a boorish population; and seizing his opportunity while the other princes were weakened by contention, he descended upon the capital, and by a prompt movement possessed himself of the throne. He did not enjoy his hazardous distinction long; for, very shortly after his usurpation, he died in the agonies of the sensual enjoyments to which it introduced him (1157).

The rival princes, who were struck back by the sudden energy and decisive operations of Igor, now rushed forward again. Kief again became the prey and victim of rapacity. Chief after chief passed through its gates, and rested for a moment on the royal seat; and were as speedily ejected. So rapid were these changes that the mind becomes fatigued in following the succession of catastrophes — the catalogue of vanishing king-craft.

During this tumult, the wisest man amongst the princes withdrew from the crowd. This was Andrew, the son of the prince of Suzdal. Regarding the struggle as being not only unrighteous in its object, but ruinous to the empire at large, he retired to his paternal

patrimony to improve those estates which his father had abandoned for a dizzy eminence. Andrew entertained a very different opinion of that formidable appanage from that which had been expressed by his father. He drew favourable conclusions from the simplicity that distinguished the habits and manners of the people, their allegiance to the boyards, and their indisposition to hazard their peaceful advantages in wars of plunder and speculation : while in Kief he could see no more than a frontier city, trembling on the confines of Hungary and Poland, harassed by the Polovtzy, and convulsed by civil feuds. The comparison led him into a further and deeper examination of causes and effects. He discerned in the fatal sovereignty of Kief the original source of the evils that wasted the land ; and he saw, in the partitions of petty governments, and the establishment of feudal principalities, the proximate causes of the national anarchy. Determined to profit, at least within his own territory, by the examples he discovered around him, and predicting, probably, some future good to spring from the consolidation of the means at his disposal, he peremptorily abolished the system of granting territorial tracts, even to his nearest relations and favourite boyards, and declared a war of extermination against the appanages.

This was at least the commencement of a theory of regeneration. Andrew clearly struck at the root of the political evil. He appeared to have been the first, if not the only prince, who saw distinctly in what the fertile mischief consisted. But the system against which he had to contend was hydra-headed. Not only had his courage to be wound up against the usages of millions, but against the interests of a crowd of tributary chiefs, who, divided upon all other questions, were easily united upon the question by which their individual prerogatives were to fall. Andrew, however, was well assured that the moral resistance, or the reluctance to forego old habits, would be less formidable than the military demonstration of the princes interested

in opposing him; and he accordingly took all his measures with caution, and prepared himself for an ultimate triumph, either over the petty princedoms which he hoped to consolidate, or, as an alternative, the grand-princedom, which he hoped to overthrow, and transfer to his own territory. With this distant view he embellished and strengthened the city of Vladimir, which he rendered in all respects worthy of becoming the capital of the empire; and he aggrandized Moscow, a city of great splendour, that had been founded by his father. In addition to these preparations, he built new cities in different lines of route, filled them with the Bulgarians of the Volga, whom he had previously subjugated, and by holding out attractions for the protection of the peaceful arts, he drew into his territories a great population from the south, glad to escape from the calamities and horrors of war.

One of the most ingenious devices of Andrew, and that which perhaps more than any other attached his subjects to him throughout the wars he afterwards hazarded, was a bold act he committed in carrying away from Kief a favourite image of the Virgin Mary, which he set up in Vladimir, building around it a magnificent church.* This stroke of policy touched the hearts of the people; and if enthusiasm could have accomplished the double object of the prince, he must have succeeded without much difficulty.

In the mean time, while Andrew was strengthening himself at home, the princes were wasting their resources in civil war. Kief declined rapidly. Her commerce fell away, her citizens became dispirited, and either wandered into towns that appeared to be more favourable to their pursuits, or abandoned themselves to riot and debauchery. With dissension and distrust, a train of vices crept in, and the facilities to destruction were daily increasing within the walls of the fated

* The church of St. Mary is still standing. In it are preserved, says Tooke, the ancient princely vestments and armour, as the purple mantle, the helmet, coat of mail, quiver, bows, arrows, &c.

capital. Throughout this period, Novgorod, which was the first Russian city, continued to rise in prosperity. It had been recently admitted into the Hanseatic league, and had become the emporium of the commerce of the east. The steady independence of its inhabitants had preserved it from invasion and domestic oppression, during the time that Kief, to which it was nominally tributary, was the prey of the lords of the fiefs. In proportion as the power of the grand prince declined, the energy and freedom of the Novgorodians increased. To manifest their sense of the liberty they enjoyed, they deposed their princes, and sought the most frivolons pretexts for reversing their decrees, and making new laws to fetter their personal privileges.

The situation of Russia at this important juncture was, perhaps, more anomalous than at any former period. The capital had faded into insignificance, having by degrees lost its adjacent provinces, and being now reduced to the limits of the city, the trade of which was seriously diminished. Novgorod, the ancient rival, and always the commercial superior of Kief, was extending its means, acquiring enormous wealth, and making mercantile alliances with the trading towns of Germany and Livonia. Midway between these cities, but stretching further inland, Vladimir was rising into importance, and obtaining consideration for the extent of its commercial connections, and the firmness of its government. The novel principles, too, of Andrew, which were directed to the annihilation of the established settlements, drew upon him and his affairs an extraordinary degree of attention. It was impossible that this state of things could continue. The issue was, therefore, precipitated, even before the armament for the struggle was fully prepared.

Alarmed by the growing power of Novgorod, the prince of Suzdal took a sudden resolution of advancing upon that town at the head of his army; considering that the capture of so formidable a neighbour was an essential preliminary to the more comprehensive objects

he had in view. But his expedition terminated in discomfiture. He was repulsed from before the gates of the proud Novgorod, with signal intrepidity, in the year 1168.

Determined, however, not to return without laurels to his excited subjects, he directed his course upon the feeble capital. The alternative seemed to present itself at an appropriate moment. His troops, eager for plunder as well as renown, fought desperately in the trenches, and, after an obstinate conflict, in which the Kievians possessed no other advantage than that of position, the city was taken by storm, despoiled of all its memorials of the sovereignty, and degraded to a fief, dependent upon the prince of Suzdal. Thus fell the second capital of the Russian empire, yielding up the supremacy to the city of Vladimir. But Novgorod was yet to be subdued before the gigantic project of concentration could be carried into effect.

Elated by success, Andrew in the following year despatched a large body of troops, headed by one of his sons, and commanded in detail by seventy-one princes of the blood, into the territory of Novgorod. Such, however, was the valour and determination of those resolute republicans, that they again defeated their powerful invaders. But this defeat settled the question of the sovereignty. The Novgorodians, although they could not be conquered by the armies of Andrew, yielded unhesitatingly to his policy; and, perceiving the advantages of a theory, which promised to bind up the interests of the divergent appanages, a theory from which they would be likely to derive more commercial benefits than even the new capital itself, they consented to acknowledge the supremacy of Vladimir, which was thus distinctly erected into the seat of the grand princedom.

One part of the scheme was now fulfilled. Andrew was grand prince. But he was aware of the perils of his elevation, and felt, that before the consolidation of Russia could be completed, he had to crush the princes of the fiefs, who were now confederating to overthrow

the authority of the man whose whole policy was steadily directed to the destruction of their several governments. The impediments that stood in his way were great. The effort for liberating the empire from the toils of its numerous petty tyrants was made too soon. There were too many interests thriving upon the feudal system to permit of the success of any single opposition to their united powers. Each prince had his boyards subsisting upon his patronage, and his body-guard, and his troops of adventurers, all of whom were supported by the very system which Andrew laboured to destroy. A revolution so extensive in its objects and its results demanded the assistance of time and fortuitous events. It could not be accomplished by the mere force of arms, or the perseverance of successive conquests; for no sooner was one principality subdued than another rebelled, and the grand prince thus in vain endeavoured to traverse the mighty labyrinth of insurrections that sprang up under his feet as he proceeded. Besides, even the population of the remote fiefs were unwilling to abandon the usages to which they had been so long accustomed, and wherever the flag of revolt was unfurled, the serfs of the soil poured in to join the ranks of the soldiery.

The consequence was, that Andrew enjoyed an empty title. Prince after prince revolted. The examples of severity which Andrew made amongst his own kinsmen, to whom he refused appanages, and who were banished for their resistance, and forced to fly into Byzantium, were of no avail in restoring security. Kief and Novgorod took advantage of the general clamour, and declared themselves independent; and the precedent was followed with avidity by the rest of the principalities. Andrew found it difficult to preserve even his own patrimony of Suzdal entire and undivided, although it was fenced in and garrisoned by an army of 50,000 men. The passion for the revival of small governments, and the rapacious corruption to which they gave such unrestrained opportunities, spread at last to Vladimir; and, in the end, Andrew, after having achieved the

merit of demonstrating the impracticability of a project which, if carried into effect, would have raised Russia from the degradation to which civil strife had reduced her, was barbarously assassinated by his own subjects. This was in 1174, exactly six years after his first descent upon Novgorod.

With the fall of Andrew of Suzdal — a prince whose character is best delineated in the comprehensiveness of his great plan for the incorporation of the scattered parts of the empire — came a reaction which, in the fury of the times, could not be repressed. As he had attempted to concentrate, by one decisive effort, the feudalities that covered the face of the country, so his successor was required to break up the domain of Suzdal into inferior appanages, as if to establish the ascendancy of the process of decomposition over that of union and strength. Suzdal, so long as it had been combined under one head, formed the nucleus of the Russian possessions, in the midst of which it stood. Andrew's successor, however, parcelled it out, and it fell away into subordinate seats of mock authority, occupied by governors who were constantly preying upon each other.

The second successor of Andrew pushed this piece of weakness still farther. Not content with seeing his princedom decay by degrees under his rule, he permitted a dependent prince, upon whom he had conferred an appanage out of his own domain, actually to dispute with him the title to the sovereignty. It might be supposed that this measure of folly was the sublime of imbecility; but the third successor of the valiant and ill-fated Andrew exceeded his predecessors in absurdity. He found his throne a mere puppet stool; but that did not satisfy him. He resolved to cast away even the show of authority; and he accordingly released the tributary princes from the obligations of their dependence, and declared that they were not responsible to him, and were accountable for their trusts to God alone.

This confirmed the dismemberment of the empire. The seat of the government having been gradually re-

moved from the borders of the European states, those Russian provinces that lay on that side were speedily loosened from the mass, and, first falling into disorder, next yielded to the impregnation of the foreign tribes, that were tempted to pour in upon the defenceless principalities. The population soon became Polish, Hungarian, and Lithuanian; and, in some places, presented a mixture of them all. The machine of government once transported from those points that held the keys of commerce with Greece and the great states of Europe, the order of legislation became confounded. The whole of the north of Europe was, therefore, soon broken up and disorganised. The vast empire of Russia existed only on the map. The energies of the national spirit, the objects of national enterprise, and the co-operation of national resources, ceased to be exhibited. Thus this vast territory became an easy prey to an enormous power, that was about this period gathering like a thunder-storm in Asia, ready to descend upon those disjointed domains, in which half the work of devastation was already accomplished by internal misrule and savage discord. In these circumstances, the genius of a barbarian chieftain discovered the facilities of an easy conquest, which his skill and valour soon enabled him to consummate. The power of resistance was exhausted in Russia. Her struggling soldiery were wanderers in search of food, and her commercial population subsisted like wolves in the haunts of traffic. A concentration of physical capacity to any considerable extent was impossible; and thus worn out and enfeebled, she fell before the triumphant arms of Ghengis Khan.

CHAP. IX.

VICTORIES OF GHENGIS KHAN. — BATTLE ON THE FRONTIERS. — THE SOUTHERN PART OF RUSSIA RAVAGED BY THE TARTARS. — CALAMITIES OF THE EMPIRE. — DESCENT OF BATY UPON THE BULGARIANS. — HIS DESTRUCTIVE PROGRESS IN RUSSIA. — VLADIMIR FALLS BEFORE HIM. — DEATH OF YURY. — BATY EVACUATES RUSSIA. — YAROSLAF RESIGNS NOVGOROD TO HIS SON, AND TAKES POSSESSION OF VLADIMIR. — REAPPEARANCE OF BATY. — REDUCTION OF KIEF. — BATY WITHDRAWS INTO POLAND, AND FINALLY ESTABLISHES THE GOLDEN HORDE ON THE VOLGA. — THE CUNNING POLICY OF THE TARTARS. — INCREASING POWER OF THE CHURCH. — YAROSLAF ADVANCED TO THE GRAND PRINCEDOM UNDER THE SUPREME CONTROL OF THE KHAN. — JEALOUSY AND WEAKNESS OF THE RUSSIAN PRINCES.

While Russia was sinking under the spreading anarchy, the neighbouring country of Asia was convulsed by foreign and intestine wars. Causes very nearly similar had contributed to the dispersion of that gigantic power. On the death of Malek Shah, the unity of the empire was destroyed by the contests of the provincial governors for the supreme authority. During the succeeding interval of division and weakness, the crusaders entered Asia Minor, subjugated Jerusalem, and, extending their conquests to the plains of Mesopotamia, established the first Frank or Latin principality beyond the Euphrates. The coalition of the Turkish forces, however, drove them from their fastness after they had occupied it for half a century. The Turkish dynasty of the Seljooks experienced a similar fate, and was subsequently extirpated by the pastoral tribes that inhabited the countries lying to the north of China.

About the beginning of the thirteenth century arose a Tartar chief whose name is immortalised amongst the

destroyers of the earth. His life presents an almost incredible series of triumphs.

Ghengis Khan was originally the chief of a horde of shepherds, comprising in their own body 30,000 or 40,000 families. The habits of these people being migratory, they were seldom enabled to accumulate solid power, or to settle themselves under a distinct government; but the daring spirit and perseverance of Ghengis Khan turned this unfavourable mode of life to advantage. As tribes of passage, they were always in motion, and always in arms. The pitched camp was their home. They had nothing to lose by defeat, and every thing to gain by victory. War was to them a cheap means of living, and a congenial source of employment. They carried with them wherever they went all that they required to supply their wants, which were primitive, and the ready weapons with which they could force a supply in case of need. Thus, although they were deficient in that compact strength which is derived from co-operation under an acknowledged authority and distinct responsibility, yet they possessed extraordinary power by acting in great masses, and by being excited in common by one object—subsistence—which exercised over their minds an influence as decisive as that of regular government, while it was more consistent with their habits. These traits were sedulously cultivated into soldiership by Ghengis Khan. He convoked an annual assemblage of the chiefs in his presence, inspired them with a profound sense of his greatness, preserved his vast hordes in villages, so close to each other that the war-cry could be transmitted from one to another with the certainty and rapidity of a telegraph, and maintained the whole of this astounding physical force in such a constant state of activity, that a sudden organisation of hundreds of thousands could at any time be accomplished with facility.

Contrasted with these bands of military depredators were the subdued and unwarlike peasantry of Russia. As the several governments of that country declined,

the use of arms fell away. During the short intervals of repose which occasionally took place amidst the storms of domestic strife, commerce struggled to extend its domain, and a great part of the people, sick of the petty and profitless wars in which they only reaped new disasters, embraced the quieter occupations of the dwellers in the walled towns. By degrees, too, those who still inhabited the plains ceased to act in concert, and the passion for aggrandisement decayed, and with it the usages of battle. In this condition, the lawless Tartars and Mongols, under Ghengis Khan, found the people of Russia, when, flushed with conquests in Asia, they poured through the defiles of Causasus to extend an empire won by aggression and cemented by barbarian energy. The history of the ravages and massacres that took place in Asia under the incursions of this triumphant savage, are unparalleled in the annals of the world.

The causes of the invasion of Russia are obvious enough, although some historians, in an extra spirit of inquiry, have attempted to trace it to motives of no account in the great scheme of plunder and ambition. Having subjugated Asia, it was not likely that Ghengis Khan could have looked upon Russia with indifference, especially as it lay in his path to the wealthy Byzantium, the great lure that in these times tempted the cupidity of the pastoral nations. Besides these, there were other temptations in detail that presented arguments strong enough to induce that enterprising chieftain to risk his fortune in Europe.

In the first place, continual practice in the field gave the Tartars a decided advantage over the Russians. They possessed those provinces that produced the finest horses; and as they almost lived in the saddle, and were cavalry to a man, their ascendancy over the Russian troops, which were composed of infantry, and these but ill disciplined, was still more secure. As they had already in their first descent, in 1221, which was sixteen years before they finally swept through the

Russian cities, made themselves masters of the Oural and Caucasus, where the prolific mines of their opponents were situated, there is reason to conjecture that their arms were in all respects more keen, available, and various than those of their antagonists. They saw and understood their superiority. Headlong rage and fanaticism did the rest. Their wandering propensities were gratified by the expedition, their indifference to danger rendered them insensible to difficulties, and the vaticination of a Tartar prophet, who had foretold that Ghengis Khan would one day be master of the world, supplied the last motive to this gigantic enterprise. The possibility of success was an inducement to every act of treachery that could be devised to keep these people in motion; and that possibility being clearly demonstrated in this instance, afforded a sufficient provocation to the atrocities that ensued.

But there existed an immediate excuse or pretence for the invasion, which was greedily seized upon.

When Ghengis Khan, at the head of his predatory swarms, abandoned his ancient homestead in Tartary, he succeeded in uniting under his sole sway the different tribes distinguished by a distracting variety of names, that covered the spacious plains between China, Siberia, and the Caspian Sea. The Chinese first fell beneath his arms. His countless squadrons, increasing in number as they proceeded, assailed the celebrated rampart of the Empire of the Sun, which crumbled before them. Ninety-six cities were sacked and destroyed, and the lesser villages reduced to ashes. Children, and women, and the aged, were every where massacred, and the richest spoils in gold, silver, silk, and cattle, were carried away. Persia and the adjacent country suffered under similar depredations; and to such a mighty extent did Ghengis Khan pursue his conquests, that, before his death, the territories under his control reached from the Indus to the Euxine, from the Pacific Ocean to the Volga, and from the Persian Gulf to the borders of Siberia. While he was thus employed, his son, with a powerful

army, traversed the shores of the Caspian Sea, nearing the Russian empire with rapid strides. At last he reached the Dneipr, and completely prostrated the Circassians, who dwelt there. These people had united with the Polovtzy to make common cause against the enemy; but the Tartars first separated them by bribes, and then beat them in detail. It was now time for the Russian princes to look to their safety. The dispersion of the Polovtzy, who lay on the confines, and formed an outwork against invasion, would immediately expose Russia to the conqueror, and make a favourable breach for his entrance. The utter discomfiture of the Circassians rendered their danger the more alarming, by reducing the small means of defence possessed by the Polovtzy. So long as the united tribes on the border could have resisted invasion, the Russian princes would doubtless have continued supine, and evaded, in the pursuit of their sordid quarrels, the more imperative demands of their common country; but there was now little time left for deliberation. The Tartars, whose cunning was equal to their boldness, endeavoured insidiously to prevent a junction between the two nations, by many acts of treachery and intrigue; and they even pushed their covert designs so far as to send ambassadors into Russia, offering terms of alliance and amity. But the Russians, having the fatal example of the Circassians fresh in their memory, and, being well satisfied that no faith was to be kept with the invader, unwisely resolved to be beforehand with him in the work of treachery, thinking that they could anticipate him in his own snares. In furtherance of this object, they ordered the luckless ambassadors to instant execution; and before the news of this piece of cruelty could reach the borders, the princes of Kief and Galitsch hastened to the assistance of their ally.

The mutual jealousies of the leaders, however, marred the success of the struggle for mutual security. Their forces were imperfectly organised, and were unwilling to co-operate. The Tartars, taking advantage of these

dispositions, contrived to separate their troops, and to draw them on to the banks of the Kalka, near the mouth of the Don. When they had secured them in this position, the invaders fell upon them with impetuosity, but the Russians received the shock of their approach with firmness. Not so the Polovtzy, who, terrified at the furious onset of the enemy, broke up their phalanxes, and fled in dismay. This unexpected diversion threw the army of the prince of Galitsch, which was drawn up behind, into confusion. That prince, it appeared, had chosen that station, apart from his fellow-countrymen of Kief, in order that he might vanquish the Tartars unaided. A similar spirit actuated the prince of Kief, who, with his soldiers, occupied an adjacent hill, and looked on with indifference and secret satisfaction at the carnage that was going forward, which his position in the rear of the victors would have enabled him to avert. Even a demonstration of his advantage would have turned the fortune of the day; but the rage of family dissension was stronger than the love of the father-land; and he suffered the massacre and the triumph to proceed unchecked. His poor gratification at the defeat of his rival, however, was not of long duration; for the Tartars, after completely destroying the one, returned with redoubled fury, and annihilated the other. Thus they both fell by the indulgence of a mean passion, on the altar of which Russia was destined to be immolated.

The immediate consequence of this decisive victory on the border was, that the Tartars entered the country, ravaged the whole of its southern side, and, when they had satisfied their appetite for spoil, withdrew their armies, in search of fresh adventures.

But even these disasters, alarming as they were, could not have completely broken up the power of Russia, if her princes had been prudent enough to take counsel of experience. Having suffered all the evils of disunion, and demonstrated, year after year, the impossibility of preserving the empire from aggression, or even of keep-

ing its internal resources open and available, without establishing a league of domestic amity, it might be supposed that those princes would have embraced the first favourable opportunity of entering upon a system of mutual co-operation. That opportunity was afforded when the Tartars retired from the frontier; and ample time elapsed, during an interval of thirteen years of repose that followed, to provide abundant preparations for future defence, and to lay the groundwork of future consolidation. But the same destructive feuds amongst themselves once more employed and weakened their energies. Instead of erecting fortifications on the vulnerable points of approach, and concerting upon the means of universal resistance against the powerful foe whom they had now increased reason to apprehend, they wasted their resources in family broils, suffered the regular discipline of their armies to be utterly neglected, and their physical power to be so diminished, that they presented no longer any obstacle to the progress of the vigilant Tartars. Nor were the supineness and infatuation of the princes the only causes of that decline in their power which had exposed them to incursions from abroad. Providence, as if with a design to punish them for their impious neglect of the responsibilities that were vested in their hands, visited their country with a famine, a plague, and an earthquake. Thus, scourged by heaven, and abandoned by man, that vast region invited the spoiler to profit by its weakness.

The facility of victory was a sufficient apology for the injustice of invasion; and the nomadic tribes of the barbarians again appeared on the confines of Russia, in great numbers, flushed with recent triumphs, and confident of future successes, in the year 1237, headed by Baty, the grandson of the renowned Ghengis. The country was now so exhausted, that its subjugation was a work of rapidity.

Baty made his first descent upon the Bulgarians, the immediate neighbours of the Russians, who, unable single-handed to resist the hordes that poured down

upon them, applied to the Russian princes for assistance. But the same narrow and selfish policy that had before induced them to decline lending their aid to the Polovtzy, moved them in their answers. One of them was engaged in some vain occupations of superstition, embellishing the churches, doling out alms to mendicants, and purchasing the prayers of the monks; another was engrossed in private quarrels; and they were all so absorbed in personal and frivolous pursuits that they could not attend to the calls of public duty. They refused to ally themselves with the Bulgarians, in the hope that Baty would not push his fortunes within the frontiers; but the folly of their expectation was speedily demonstrated.

Having ravaged the country of the Bulgarians, Baty penetrated at once into Russia. The principality of Riazan fell at their approach; and so terrible was the fear they inspired that in many places the inhabitants of the towns came forth to surrender themselves, and to beg for mercy at the hands of the conquerors. But mercy did not form an article in the military code of the barbarians. The most wanton excesses by fire and sword were committed on the defenceless people. Those who submitted without a blow, and offered to acknowledge the Tartar sway, were treated with no greater lenity than those who stood obstinately in the breach, until they were vanquished by superior numbers. The whole course of the invasion was marked by atrocities. Young women and children were put to the torture in the presence of their relatives; all men capable of carrying arms were butchered in cold blood, with a view to destroy the physical means of resistance that the soil yet yielded; and the aged were either reserved for execution or cast into hopeless captivity. Pillage was the congenial companion of carnage, and after the towns and villages had been sacked of all they possessed, and their population exterminated, the Tartars completed the work of ruin by rasing them to the ground. In some instances they found it necessary to resort to

stratagem to obtain an entrance into the fortified places; but when they had succeeded in their object, they did not hesitate to violate all their promises, and treat all those who placed confidence in them with the same cruelty that distinguished, without exception, the rest of their progress.

When the prince of Riazan found that he could not make head against the furious enemy, he solited assistance from Yury, the grand prince of Vladimir, who was at that time the most powerful of the princes, although personally a man of little weight, and entirely destitute of talents. The application was made too late. There was not sufficient time allowed for levying troops, and the small auxiliary force that the exigency of the circumstances permitted Yury to send to Riazan was inadequate to the defence of that place. The result was inevitable. The Russian soldiery were cut to pieces, and Riazan was given to the flames. Elated by a series of brilliant victories, the Tartars rolled onwards like a flood. Pereïaslaf, Rostof, Suzdal, and other towns and fiefs were vanquished; and so rapid and irresistible was their course, that they came upon the very verge of the grand-principality of Vladimir before the Russians had made a single preparation for their reception. The border settlements were soon destroyed, and the country up to the gates of the capital was laid waste. When they came within sight, Yury bethought him of some means of defence.

He was engaged in the celebration of a marriage feast when the intimation reached him that the Tartars were gathering within the girdle of his territory. Instead of laying aside for a more fitting season the dalliance of the bridal ceremonies, he withdrew from the city, confiding its protection to one of his chieftains, and leaving the princess and two of his sons within the walls, in the expectation that their presence would inspire the troops with confidence. The city being strongly fortified, Yury thought it would maintain

itself sufficiently long to enable him to collect an army for the expulsion of the enemy.

But the example of Yury, who was extremely bigotted in his religious opinions, and enslaved by the most superstitious idolatry of the wooden gods of the church, had enervated the martial spirit of the people. Now was the time for this weakness to show itself amongst them. The deputy to whom the prince had assigned the responsible office of conducting the defence was a man destitute of the courage and ability requisite for the emergency. Irresolute and timid, his fears generated a panic in the garrison, and instead of combining for the common safety, and vigorously meeting the difficulties by which they were assailed, they abandoned themselves to terror, fled to the chapels and the sanctuaries, prostrated themselves before the insensate images of the saints, and neglected all available and practical resources of protection to seek for the interposition of their celestial statues. The confusion soon became universal. Beginning with the general-in-chief, it speedily spread amongst all ranks; and at last, so convinced were the inhabitants that death was inevitable, that they all embraced one holy order or another, burying themselves in the cells of the religious houses, that they might at all events die in the exercise of their faith.

This state of things was not lost upon the Tartars. Perceiving that their presence alone produced so much alarm, they concluded that the smallest demonstration of hostility would be sufficient to enforce submission. Accordingly, without putting themselves to the trouble of a formal bombardment, a party of their troops climbed up the walls one morning, and, speedily vanquishing the ineffectual show of resistance that was offered from within, threw open the gates to their panting countrymen, who instantly rushed in, and, with incredible ferocity, slaughtered every person they met, without any respect for age, sex, or condition. Not content with these horrors, they set fire to the town in several places, and revelled like demons while the

flames were ascending to the skies. The grand princess, and the ladies of her suite, took refuge at the foot of the altar, hoping to escape under the sacred roof from the relentless fury of the conquerors. The Tartars used all their arts to induce the unfortunate women to come forth from their retreat, but in vain: they remained immovable in the shelter they had chosen, preferring rather to die on the steps of the altar than to encounter the risk of the mercy that was proffered to them in terms of the most lavish asseveration. Finding that their promises of protection were of no avail, the barbarians fired the church, and the unhappy ladies perished in the ruins. The destruction of Vladimir was now complete. The buildings were either reduced to ashes, or so defaced that nothing remained but blackened walls, and crumbling outlines of the architecture: and to render the catastrophe tragic in all its particulars, it does not appear that a single Russian survived the massacre. The sword and the torch accomplished the destiny of the grand princedom.

The principle which the Tartars appear to have followed in these wars, however it was effectuated through scenes of blood at the relation of which the human mind recoils, was natural to, and inseparable from, the habits and objects of a migratory people. Cities, and fortifications, and local settlements, were impediments in the way of the wandering and restless hordes of which their armies were composed. Their dominion was the wide plain, the far-spread and houseless wastes over which they might roam in freedom and security. All they wanted was pasturage for their horses, and uninterrupted scope for their adventures.* As they advanced they destroyed the towns, because they presented obstacles to their progress, and afforded to the enemy future means of resistance. Whenever they found a large population they massacred them as

* An assembly of Mongol chiefs in 1223 carried this view of their sole want so far as to propose to Ghengis Khan to put to death all the inhabitants of the conquered countries, that the desolated regions might be turned into pasturage for their horses.

they passed on, because if they spared them it would be but to leave a hostile army in the rear. Unsettled and roving themselves, it was their interest to destroy every attempt at the establishment of permanent locations. They made a desert wherever they went, for it was all-sufficient for their own wants, while it weakened in the same proportion the power of the nations they enslaved. As they never thought of consolidating their conquests by the formation of regular governments in the theatres of their achievements, it was a prominent part of their policy to break up all such institutions as they found in existence, and to exact a rigid tribute from the nominal authorities they sometimes permitted to remain, under a bond of slavish subserviency to their new masters. Thus occasionally visiting their distant acquisitions, and committing fresh barbarities to confirm their lawless rule, the Tartars extended their ravages over an unexampled stretch of territory, and effectually arrested the struggles of the nations they subdued towards the accomplishment of any scheme of durable legislation.

The imbecile Yury was driven to despair by the intelligence of the fate of his capital. The death of his wife and children created in him a desperate courage which the perils of his country failed to excite. He lost no time in collecting the scattered bands that still adhered to him, and, at the head of a valiant but inferior force, threw himself at fearful odds upon the Tartars. In the brief fight that ensued, he enacted prodigies of valour; but nothing short of a miracle could conquer the superior numbers against which he strove. He was killed in the heat of the battle, and his followers were destroyed to a man.

The invaders, glutted with blood, and overladen with spoils, rested a short time before Vladimir. They soon, however, pushed farther into the country, and advancing into the territory of Novgorod, they suddenly halted within sixty miles of the capital. Whether they were wearied by the monotony of victories that cost them so

little trouble, or longed for fresh conquests in a more agreeable climate, is not known; but at that point of their march they stopped, and, turning their backs on the city, they rapidly evacuated the empire, after having destroyed during their progress fourteen fortified cities of the largest class, besides numberless inferior towns and scattered villages, and put to death a population of men capable of bearing arms, varying in number, according to different writers, from 10,000 to 60,000. This unexpected abandonment of the invasion filled the Russians with surprise and amazement; nor were there wanting amongst them persons who were ready to testify that this signal deliverance was attributable to the intercession of the saints, the prayers and penance of the priests, and a miracle wrought upon the hearts of the enemy by the good archangel Michael. The people universally fell into this belief in the benignant vigilance of Providence; and although it did not suggest to them the propriety of endeavouring to save Providence from the necessity of taking such care of them for the future, by urging them to take care of themselves, yet they were not unmindful of exhibiting in all their public places the pious gratitude they felt on the occasion.

At this period, Yaroslaf, the brother of the luckless Yury, was the reigning prince of Novgorod. On learning that the sovereignty of Vladimir was rendered vacant by the death of his brother, and that the Tartars had shortly afterwards retired beyond the border, he resigned his principality to his son Alexander, and in 1239 proceeded, attended by a royal escort, to take possession of the deserted fief. Yaroslaf was probably induced to adopt this measure in the hope of repairing the shattered fortunes of his deceased brother's appanage; or, perhaps, under an impression that, as the enemy had already laid waste the whole of that country, they would, on their next appearance, apply themselves to other conquests. The latter speculation proved to be correct.

Scarcely more than a year had elapsed after Baty

had drawn off his followers, when he again made a hostile demonstration in the neighbourhood of Kief. The terror of his name, and the remembrance of his former prowess, acted like a spell upon the inhabitants. They abandoned their houses, and even the fortified places, and utterly gave themselves up to despair. Wherever he came, he found that the people had fled before him; and he marked his visit in conflagrations. He made a rapid and devastating journey through the solitude of deserted towns and villages, and at last lay down before the strong fortress of Kief; which was prepared for his reception, and which was garrisoned by a body of determined soldiers. The prince had gone into Hungary before the approach of the enemy, having delegated the command of Kief to a brave and experienced officer. This general indignantly refused to surrender at the summons of the insolent Tartars, and repelled their first assaults with admirable coolness and intrepidity; but their host was too numerous to be withstood. They broke down the bastions, and possessed themselves, in one *coup*, of a position that gave them a complete control over the events of the day. The houses were as usual fired and the inhabitants slaughtered indiscriminately. But the commander persevered to the last, and in the midst of the confusion that prevailed, endeavoured to rally and animate his followers. For the sake of security, some of the wealthier citizens had conveyed their treasures to the church of St. Sophia, as well as such provisions as the shortness of the time allowed them to accumulate. Many of the inhabitants, after having been driven from their houses by the Tartars, retired to the church for shelter; although the rest of the city was invested by the besiegers. Here they endeavoured to fortify themselves, and might have succeeded in prolonging the period of their safety for several days; but they had scarcely closed up the entrances, and secured themselves within, when the building gave way under the weight of the treasures and provisions deposited in its chambers, and

the miserable crowd that had sought a temporary refuge under its roof, were either crushed to death in the ruins, or cut to pieces in the street below by the swords of the Tartars. Fortune every way seemed to favour these desperate marauders. The brave commander of the garrison fell alive into their hands; and when they reduced the ancient and noble city of Kief to ashes, they turned their attention to the consideration of the manner of death they should inflict upon the man who had offered such a valiant resistance to their arms. But the officer was fortunate in the candour and fearlessness of his bearing. It forced some degree of respect from the impetuous Baty, and at last obtained so much of his confidence, that he was enabled to intercede successfully with the conqueror for his unhappy country. The Russian general laid before the Tartar a clear statement of the actual condition of the country; he showed how it was enfeebled by domestic dissensions, and its means absorbed by encroachments from abroad; that its princes no longer possessed either the moral influence or physical strength to make head against the Tartars, and that there was nothing to be apprehended from them by way of reprisals, and scarcely any thing to be gained by prosecuting the war any farther. He also pointed out to Baty a more prolific field for conquests, where his soldiers would be more richly rewarded, and where the extent of territory to be traversed was considerably less fatiguing. Poland and Hungary had been permitted to enjoy a long interval of repose, during which they were acquiring increased energies, and making gradual preparations for a formidable defence of their possessions. The Russian suggested the supreme advantages of penetrating into those countries, where the rewards were higher, and the toil less. His arguments were too cogent to be lost upon so subtle a warrior as Baty; and, after conferring many marks of his esteem upon the gallant defender of Kief, he moved off towards Poland, forced a passage into Silesia, returned back by Moravia and Hungary, having subdued several provinces

of Croatia, Servia, Bulgaria, Wallachia, and Moldavia, and finally settled himself on the banks of the Volga, where he established the empire of the khans of Kaptschak, or the Golden Horde *, which, lying on the confines of the empire, enabled him to preserve his mastery over his vast conquests with ease and certainty.

This formed a new and important crisis in the history of the Russian principalities. They were all now subjected to the sway of the Tartar khan, and their petty sovereigns were compelled to come to the Golden Horde to pay tribute, and render homage to their inexorable master, who exacted from them the utmost penalties which they were capable of paying, and the most humiliating offices of submission.

The foundation of the empire of the Kaptschak, for such it was in extent, in plan, and in purpose, was as singular in reference to the usages of the Tartars, who never before abandoned their tents for the luxuries of cities, as it was disastrous in its immediate effects upon Russia, and ultimately fortunate in influencing and procuring that independence for which her wisest princes had toiled fruitlessly. The successors of Ghengis Khan entertained a theory of conquest no less startling than that which constituted the day-dream of Alexander the Great. They claimed the sovereignty of the whole earth, which they contended had been bequeathed to them by the will of their distinguished progenitor. For the subjugation of the continent of Europe they assigned a period of eighteen years, and treated the rest as a matter of easy

* The name of the Golden Horde was derived from the gorgeous tapestry and sumptuous appearance of the tent of the khan. The empire of the Kaptschak was also called the Golden Horde as a distinction, signifying the residence of the khan. The khan of China made a present of a rich tent, covered with cloth of gold, to Ghengis Khan, and that, probably, might have originally suggested the title. Afterwards the name came more loosely into use, and at last the Russians applied it indiscriminately to the whole range of the Tartar empire, that stretched upon their confines like a giant keeping watch. Levesque says, that the Kaptschak comprehended the regions lying between the Volga, the Yaik, and the Don; de Guignes pushes it still farther towards the north-east of the Caspian. It was at first a Khannat, complete in itself, under the jurisdiction of Baty; but it afterwards fell into the four district khannats of Kazan, Astrakan, Kaptschak, and the Crimea, each and all of which subsequently gave way at different periods of history before the Russian arms, and are now included within the boundaries of the great northern empire.

and inevitable certainty. The Kaptschak, forming in itself but one of five divisions of the empire of the Mongol Tartārs, soon threw off its dependency and erected itself into a separate government, subsisting upon the revenues wrung from the Russians, and maintaining its despotic authority by a strange mixture of cruelty and craft. The victories that had been accomplished in Russia by the Tartar hordes had weakened the feudal system of the princes; and no opportunities were suffered by the conquerors to escape of hastening its final extinction. They carefully exacted their tributes, and compelled the princes to pay them in person. The journey to the Golden Horde usually occupied a year, between the delays that were designedly contrived at the court, and the difficulties that were thrown in the way of the princes. So long an absence from their appanages was obviously calculated to stimulate discontent at home, and to encourage aggression from abroad, so that the Tartars not only riveted the chains of the Russian chiefs by the direct impositions of arbitrary power, but by exposing them to domestic evils that undermined their strength, and alienated them from their subjects. The Tartars knew well that they could not retain Russia except by secretly fomenting the dissensions to which her anomalous situation gave so much occasion; and as the Lithuanians, the Swedes, and the Livonians, combined with the Poles and the Hungarians, were now pouring in at intervals upon the exhausted districts, the necessity of keeping upon terms with the khan became the more imperative, not only as he was the lord paramount of the soil, but its most powerful neighbour.

Nor was it by these means alone that the Tartars preserved their ascendancy.

In a state of society such as existed in Russia, under which there was no security for property, all private interests being kept in constant uncertainty by the feuds of the petty governments, and the avidity to profit by every favourable opportunity which they generated in the people, it was natural that a religion which presented

so many aspects of hope and consolation, and which, in its particular development, laid so strong a hold of the fears and weaknesses of its professors, should maintain a powerful influence over the minds of the multitude. In proportion as civil war, and the disastrous incursions of barbarian tribes, repressed the spread of information, and confirmed the ignorance of the Russians, superstition in its most bigotted shapes obtained an ascendancy. The unhappy people, when they were hard pressed by the enemy, threw themselves for safety into their churches, fondly believing that the sacred roof protected them from the fury of arms, or that, at all events, they should die in more acceptable distress at the foot of the altar. So when the peaceful arts were crushed amongst them, and their commerce destroyed, they betook themselves, in despair, to works of penance and acts of contrition! The Tartars perceived this increasing tendency to religious observances, and wisely encouraged it, not only with a view to win over the people more effectually to their side by raising a new power superior to that of the princes of the fiefs, but with the more subtle design of gradually weaning the Russians from their warlike habits. This deep and crafty policy was attended with signal success.

While the Tartars wielded the most arbitrary sway over the princes and the people, they loaded the church with honours, augmented its revenues, and conferred upon it the most munificent grants. The only mediators whom they condescended to hear with patience and favour, were the metropolitans and bishops, to whose petitions, on behalf of their flocks, they frequently assented, at the very time that they refused similar applications preferred by the princes in person. This great distinction shown to the church was still more strongly marked in the laws which the Tartars enacted for its protection. They punished sacrilege with death, and prohibited any of their people, on the pain of the extreme penalty, from molesting or insulting the monasteries, which were now every day enriched by extra-

vagant donations and bequests. They exempted the ecclesiastical domains from the payment of taxes either to the horde or the native princes *, and permitted the monks to embark in commercial speculations, which, being thus fenced in by exclusive regulations, were soon engrossed almost wholly by the favoured class. The circumstances in which the church was placed rendered it attractive to the highest personages, who were driven by oppression from every other resource. Accordingly we find that the Russian nobles sought for quiet and wealth in the retirement of the cloisters, and gladly abandoned the unequal struggle with fortune in their proper sphere, for the more prosperous pursuits of the monastic life. This disposition to embrace the clerical habit was carried so far, that most of the Russian grand dukes made their religious profession, and assumed the coif, when they found themselves approaching their end; and when it happened that any of them recovered, they were compelled to forsake their worldly dignity, and continue in the order which, in their mortal exigency, they had embraced. The influence of the church thus grew to an enormous height. Every man at his death bequeathed to it a legacy according to his means; and as treasures from all quarters poured into its lap, the monks were enabled not only to decorate their chapels in the most costly style, but to increase their landed possessions to a vast extent by the outlay of the surplus funds, which constantly accumulated in their hands. The temporal privileges which were attached to the religious profession through these and other means, had their effect upon the inhabitants, and all those who could afford to purchase a sanctuary, or endow a new church,

* In the beginning of the fourteenth century, Usbek Khan declared in a firman, that henceforth the church should be the sole judge of the church, and of every person who dwelt on its domains: that he renounced all tributes payable by the clergy, as well as all his other rights, to which the rest of the community were subjected, such as plough-money, tolls, farm-tax, customs, and relays for his service: and that whoever should contravene the law, either by plundering the property of the church, or daring to condemn or censure the Greek religion, should be punished with death. To such an extremity, for political purposes, did the Tartars deem it expedient to carry the protection of ecclesiastical institutions.

were prompt to avail themselves of so tempting a mode of acquiring personal weight and general esteem. The consequence was, that there were more churches and monasteries built during the sway of the Tartars, than at any former or subsequent period of Russian history.

This was the only interference, however, with the internal affairs of the country which the Tartars considered it either necessary or judicious to make. They left the local administration entirely to the judgment of the princes, satisfied with having deprived them, by their inordinate patronage of the church, of that actual authority which constitutes the real power of a state. Yaroslaf, who, we have seen, possessed himself of the principality of Vladimir on the death of his brother Yury, resigning his own princedom of Novgorod to his son Alexander, was compelled to present himself to the khan, in order to have his claim to the grand princedom confirmed by the decision of the Tartar. But even this concession in a matter of mere form, — for the grand princedom was now no better than a name, could not be obtained from the grasping Baty without a lavish expenditure of bribes. By the help of a multitude of expensive presents, he succeeded in propitiating the good-will of the khan, and was nominated to the empty dignity he sought, on condition that he should acknowledge the khan of Kaptschak as his feudal lord, and the supreme or head khan of all the Mongolian hordes as his sovereign in chief. This was not a very difficult admission for a powerless chieftain; and Yaroslaf, happy to secure his object upon any terms, subscribed to the required conditions, and returned to Novgorod as grand prince of Russia.

A distinction, which was always a source of grievous contention amongst the Russian fiefs, appeared in a still more jealous light, under the circumstances in which it was obtained by Yaroslaf. His revenues were so impoverished, that it was with great difficulty he could maintain the show of royalty, and his physical means were so thoroughly exhausted, that he could not contest

his right in the field, if any recusant prince started up to oppose him. The sense of his weakness caused a general disaffection among the neighbouring governments, and nothing but the apprehension that he could procure succour from the Tartars, prevented them from declaring open war upon him. As it was, they refused to acknowledge his sovereignty; and in preference to submitting to a prince who was of their own blood and nation, and whose honours were imposed by foreign hands, they unwisely chose to tender their obedience to the Tartars at once. In every insignificant contest that arose about the distribution of lands, and the execution of tribute money, the princes invariably referred to the khan of Kaptschak, whose potential voice settled their paltry disputes.

From this unworthy division amongst themselves sprang a new evil, which condemned Russia to a succession of fresh misfortunes. As Baty had been won over to the interests of Yaroslaf by presents, the petty princes deemed that, by similar arts, they might succeed in ejecting the grand prince from his throne. Each of them pressed forward, from time to time, loaded with gifts, to the Golden Horde, in the vain pursuit of the darling object of their ambition; and as they were well persuaded that they could not by force of arms wrest the sovereignty from the chief who was chosen by the khan, they spared no outlay to gain it by the good grace of the Tartars. In the prosecution of this design, they still farther reduced their own means, and exposed their country still more to the cupidity of the conquerors.

CHAP. X.

THE TARTARS ENCOURAGE THE DISSENSIONS OF THE PRINCES. — INVASION OF NOVGOROD SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED BY ALEXANDER NEVSKY. — REVOLT OF THE NOVGORODIANS. — ALEXANDER LEAVES THE CITY, IS SOLICITED TO RETURN, AND ACQUIRES FRESH FAME IN A MILITARY EXPEDITION TO LIVONIA. — HE IS ELEVATED TO THE GRAND PRINCEDOM. — PREDATORY EXCURSION INTO SWEDEN. — NEW ACCESSIONS ARE MADE TO THE TERRITORIES OF ALEXANDER. — FRESH TAXES LAID ON RUSSIA BY THE KHAN. — UNPOPULARITY OF THE TARTAR COLLECTORS. — REBELLION BREAKS OUT IN DIFFERENT PLACES. — THE RUSSIAN PRINCES ARE SUMMONED AT THE HEAD OF THEIR TROOPS TO THE GOLDEN HORDE. — ALEXANDER'S INFLUENCE PROPITIATES THE VENGEANCE OF THE KHAN. — SUSPICIOUS DEATH OF ALEXANDER. — HIS CHARACTER. — THE SEAT OF THE GRAND PRINCEDOM TRANSFERRED TO TWER. — RESISTANCE OF THE PRINCE OF MOSCOW. — THE GRAND PRINCE IS ACCUSED OF TREACHERY, AND EXECUTED. — YURY, PRINCE OF MOSCOW, ASCENDS THE THRONE — IS DENOUNCED AND ASSASSINATED. — HE IS SUCCEEDED BY ALEXANDER OF TWER, WHO, WITH HIS SON, IS PUT TO DEATH AT THE GOLDEN HORDE.

Throughout the whole of their conquests in Russia, the Tartars obviously acted upon a principle which was well calculated to ensure the destruction of the empire, and to facilitate their own complete ascendancy. At first they destroyed the walled places that stood in the way of their projects, and afforded a means of defence to the people: they destroyed the population wherever they went, in order that the remnant which survived should feel the more surely the weight of their power; and, at length, as their advance became the more safe and certain, they relaxed slightly in their cruelties, enrolling under their standard the slaves they captured, thus turning their conquests into armaments. But the climate of Russia, and the difference of religion, ren-

dered it an unsuitable place for their location. As they could not remain upon the soil which they had vanquished, they established themselves on the frontiers to watch over their new possessions, leaving nominal Russian princes to fight for them against the invading tribes that continually rushed in. Those very invasions served also to strengthen the Tartar yoke, by weakening the resisting power of the natives.

The recognition of their sovereignty was complete in the homage and tribute they demanded and received. Every prince was forced to solicit his investiture from the khan of Kaptschak; and even when Yaroslaf was established as grand prince over the rest, Baty cunningly allowed several rivals to put in their claims to that authority, and obliged them to wait so long for his decision, that the order of succession remained unsettled. This state of suspense in which the feudal lords were kept, and a series of famines which followed the destructive march of the Tartars, plunged the country into a condition of abject wretchedness.

During this period of indecision on the one hand, and forlorn imbecility on the other, the Lithuanians succeeded in appropriating to themselves some portions of the north-western division of Russia; and the Swedes and Danes, and Livonian knights of the sword, proceeded to make demonstrations of a descent upon Novgorod. Alexander, however, who had succeeded his father in that principality, finding that the grand prince was unable to render him any assistance towards the defence of the city, anticipated the advance of the intruders, and giving them battle on the banks of the Neva, gained a decisive victory. He immediately built strong forts on the spot to repel any future attempts, and returned in triumph to Novgorod.

So signal was the overthrow of the enemy, that Alexander was honoured by the surname of Nevsky, in commemoration of the achievement.

Flushed with a triumph as unexpected as it was important, Alexander Nevsky desired to enlarge the

bounds of his power at home. The army were warmly attached to him, for his personal intrepidity was no less remarkable than his sagacity, and both qualities were rarely before so strongly developed in so young a man. The Novgorodians, however, always jealous of their municipal privileges, and suspicious of the motives of their rulers, resisted the first show of a passion for the extension of Alexander's power, and, apprehensive that he should abuse his advantages, they remonstrated against his proceedings, and at last broke out into open rebellion. The proud spirit of the young prince was justly offended at the impetuous revolt of his subjects, and he retired at once from the city, going over to his father at Vladimir, to request the aid of a sufficient force to restore order. But Yaroslaf, in the conviction of his own inadequacy, was unwilling to interfere with the wishes of the Novgorodians; and, conferring upon Alexander the inferior principality of Pereïslaf, he sent another of his sons, at the request of the people, to reign over the disaffected province. The Novgorodians, however, speedily discovered their error. The Danes, induced to speculate upon the absence of Alexander, a second time appeared within the boundary, and the new prince, an inexperienced young man, made choice of such measures as clearly proved him to be unfit for his office. The people became dissatisfied, and, being now convinced that Alexander was the only man who could relieve them in their difficulty, petitioned him to return; but he indignantly rejected the request. A second embassy, headed by the archbishop, was more fortunate, and Alexander Nevsky once more placed himself at the head of the army, and obtained a second victory over the invaders. Resolved to profit by the obligations under which he laid his subjects by resuming, at their own instance, the reins of government, and freeing them from the presence of a dangerous foe, he now pushed on to Livonia, and routed the combined forces of a triple alliance of Germans, Danes, and Tschudes, on the borders of the Peipus lake. This exploit, which the youthful

hero achieved in the year 1245, not only obtained him the love and admiration of his own subjects, but speedily spread his name through every part of the empire, until it finally reached the court of the Golden Horde, where it elicited an unusual degree of curiosity and applause.

In the person of the prince of Novgorod, a new dawn of hope broke over Russia, and nothing but the disheartening feuds of the chiefs checked the growth of that incipient desire for liberty which the influence of his successes was calculated to create. Alexander was adapted to the occasion; and if the disunited sovereigns could have now consented to forego their low animosities, and to merge their personal differences in the common cause, Alexander was the instrument of all others the most fit to undertake the conduct of so gallant an enterprise. But it required an extraordinary combination of circumstances to awaken the Russian princes to a full sense of their degradation, and to inspire them with resolution to set about the rescue of their country from the chains of the spoiler. Alexander's example was useless. He could do no more than demonstrate the possibility of improvement within the reach of his own domain, and there he vigorously reformed the idle and slavish habits of the people; but for all purposes of a national and extensive character, his exertions failed to procure any favourable result.

On the death of the grand prince Yaroslaf, whose reign appears to have passed away unmarked by any events of importance, the khan invited, or rather summoned, Alexander to the horde. A number of competitors or claimants for the grand princedom had already brought forward their petitions; some were lingering in person at the court; others were represented by ambassadors bearing rich tributes; and all were in a state of considerable anxiety pending the decision of the Tartar. Alexander alone was silent. The fame of his deeds had preceded him. He did not come to supplicate for an honour, to which he felt that he possessed an unexceptionable claim, but he attended as a point of duty, with-

out reference to a nomination that could hardly increase his popularity. His independent bearing, his manly figure, and the general candour and fearlessness of his manners, gained him at once the confidence and admiration of the khan, who did not hesitate to assure him that, although he had heard much in his favour, report had fallen short of his distinguished merits. Auspicious, however, as this reception was, it did not terminate in Alexander's appointment to the suspended sceptre of Vladimir. The policy of the Tartar was to keep the order of succession in periodical uncertainty, so that the Russians might the more distinctly see how much the destinies of the country depended on his supreme will. It was not until Alexander paid a second visit to the horde, in 1252, that he was raised to the dignity of grand prince. It was accorded to him in a very gracious spirit, and he entered upon his new office with more earnest zeal than had for a long time before been displayed by his predecessors.

The first act of the grand prince was an expedition against Sweden, undertaken with two objects: firstly, to crush a formidable foe that occasionally harassed the frontier districts; and secondly, to give employment and opportunity for pillage to his numerous army, whom he had already taught to calculate upon the rewards of spoliation. It was a concession to the rude usages of the time, which Alexander was too wise to withhold. The expedition terminated in victory. The triumphant army laid a part of the Swedish territory under contribution, succeeded in capturing a number of prisoners, and returned home laden with spoils.

These successes, and the skilful policy of the grand prince, made the most favourable impression on the mind of the khan, who now, whenever dissensions arose amongst the princes, either referred the adjustment of their differences to Alexander, or confiscated their dominions and annexed them to the grand princedom. Two instances of the latter description may be recorded as evidences of the cunning displayed by the

Tartar in the protection of the Greek religion. While Alexander was at the height of his prosperity, the prince of Kief, affected by some sudden admiration of the Roman catholic ritual, signified his submission to the pope, acknowledging his holiness's supremacy over the churches of his principality. Another prince, his brother-in-law, adopted a similar measure, which was equally offensive to Tartars and Russians. The khan, irritated by proceedings so directly at variance with his will, deprived them of their authority, and transferred their territories to the grand prince, who, according to some writers, was even assisted by the Tartars in seizing upon them.

The tribute which had been originally imposed upon the Russians by their conquerors had always been levied by the princes, the khan being satisfied to receive it at their hands. As the power of Alexander increased, the khan gradually recalled this system of delegation, and adopted a more strict and jealous mode of collection. The first contribution was raised upon the princes, as tribute money, and they were left to procure it amongst their subjects as well as they could. But it now assumed the shape of a tax on persons and property. In order to ensure the regularity of its payment, and protect the khan against evasions, Tartar officers were appointed in every district to attend exclusively to the rigid collection of the revenue. From this tax, which was imposed without distinction upon every Russian, and rated according to his means, the clergy alone were exempt: and even they, in one instance, were attempted to be taxed in later times; but the khan who sought to enforce it was obliged to yield to the double argument of long-established usage and weighty presents from the wealthy monks.

The new burthen lay heavily upon the people, and the mode in which it was enforced through foreign collectors, of the nation of their oppressors, enhanced its mortifications. Universal discontent followed the tax-gatherers. They were treated with unreserved dis-

pleasure. It was with great difficulty they could carry into effect the objects of their unpopular mission, and in some places, particularly the cities where the population was more compact, and the communication of opinion more rapid and complete, they were received with execration. This resistance on the one hand no doubt produced increased severity on the other; and as the levy advanced, the people became less cautious in the exhibition of their feelings, and the collectors more rigorous and despotic. Novgorod, which had always been the rallying point for the assertion of freedom in Russia, took the lead in this revolt against the khan's authority. The Novgorodians, to a man, refused to pay the tax, and even threatened to wreak their vengeance upon the officers who were appointed to collect it. The prince of Novgorod, one of Alexander's sons, urged to extremities by his steady republican advisers, sanctioned these declarations of independence, and openly signified his determination to prevent the exaction of so ignominious a tribute within the districts dependent upon his rule. Alexander, perceiving, in this dangerous obstinacy of his son, the source of serious calamity to the empire at large, and knowing well that neither the Novgorodians, nor any other fraction of the Russian people, were in a condition to resist the powerful armies of the khan, should he be provoked to compel compliance at the point of the sword, undertook in person to appease the growing tumult, and presenting himself in the city, rebuked the inhabitants for having perilled the safety of the country by their contumacy, severely punished the rash advisers of his son, and finally arranged the payment of the tax to the satisfaction of the Tartar officers. Still the Novgorodians were not content. They remonstrated against the unequal pressure of the tax, setting forth that it fell more grievously upon the poor than upon the rich, and that if they were obliged to submit to such a penalty, it should at all events be adjusted proportionately to the means of individuals. Even this difficulty Alexander was enabled

to meet by assuming the responsibility of the payment himself, a vexatious and ungrateful duty, which, however, he willingly accepted, as it afforded him the means of quelling discontents that might have otherwise terminated in a sanguinary convulsion.

The adjustment of this matter in Novgorod was no sooner concluded, than a similar spirit of resistance broke out in other places. The collectors, it appeared, were not only vigilant in their office, but sometimes unjust; and the Russians, provoked by the insolence of their oppressors, laid violent hands upon them in many places. The inhabitants of several towns gratified their revenge by merely forcing them to become Christians, or hunting them, like dogs, beyond the walls, while, in other cases, they massacred them whereever they appeared. The flame of rebellion was thus rapidly spreading over the empire, when the khan, resolved to make one decisive example that should have the effect of crushing the insubordination at once, summoned all the Russian princes to appear before him at the head of their troops, adding, by way of explanation of a proceeding so unusual, that he meditated a distant campaign, and required the aid of all the forces they could bring. Alexander was not at a loss to penetrate the designs of the khan. He saw very clearly that the object of withdrawing the armed population to the frontier, was to facilitate an invasion of the interior; and he resolved, at all risks, to go alone to the horde, and to endeavour, by the exercise of such influence as he possessed, to propitiate the vengeance of the Tartar. He knew that in doing this, he exposed himself to serious danger, and that, in all probability, his life would pay the forfeit of his disobedience. But he was willing to sacrifice his life in a venture which had for its object the safety of his country. Nor did he altogether miscalculate his power. He was at first treated with marked contumely, and obliged to suffer many humiliations from the coarse-mannered chieftains who constituted the khan's court; and for a long

time his chivalric enterprise appeared to wear a very hopeless aspect. For a whole year his petitions remained unheard, or were only visited with scorn, which was not a little increased by the unfortunate coincidence of a dismemberment that at that time broke up the horde into factious parties. Nogay, one of the warriors of the Kaptschak, taking advantage of the unsettled state of allegiance in Russia, rendered himself independent of the khan *; and this circumstance, shadowing forth as it did the seeds of dissolution that lay deeply sown in the councils of the horde, rendered the attainment of Alexander's object still more difficult of accomplishment. Still, however, he persevered in the face of accumulating obstacles; and, finally gaining the ear of the khan, persuaded him to forgive the intemperance of the people, and to forego his plan of raising an army. This great end secured, which seemed to wind up his career with as much glory as it commenced, Alexander Nevsky prepared to return home; but expired on the road at a short distance from the horde. The manner of his death, its suddenness, and the time when it occurred, afford abundant justification to the suspicion that he died by unfair means. His father experienced a similar fate in the same neighbourhood; and several of his successors expired so soon after their departure from the Kaptschak as to lead to the conjecture, strengthened by the known treachery of the Tartars, that poison had been administered to them on the eve of their journey. In one or two cases, the mode of living of the Tartars, to which the Russians were unaccustomed, the use of unclean and unwholesome food, and the irregularity and looseness of the habits to which the princes

* Nogay was sent at the head of a powerful body of troops to conquer the lands lying beyond the Euxine. It appears that he had no sooner succeeded in this enterprise by subjugating the whole of the country from the Don to the Danube, than he shook off his allegiance to the khan of Kaptschak, and established an empire in the possessions he had thus won with the sword. The empire afterwards fell to pieces; but a tribe of Tartars, called the Nogayans, still survives in the steppes of the north side of the Caucasus. Some of these people, now under the Russian sway, are to be found in the steppes of the Crimea.

were obliged to conform during their visit, might account for such fatalities; but these causes could not have operated with such certainty so often, and always at a similar point of time. The truth seems to be, that the Tartars adopted that convenient mode of getting out of their way such men as were growing troublesome, or were likely by the force of their personal influence to embarrass the government of the remote principalities. The system of open outrage had been gradually abandoned as the sphere of their settled possessions became determined. The excuse for putting the vassal princes to death, which a war of extermination yielded, no longer existed; and they could not hope to maintain their authority in Russia, without an enormous expenditure of blood, and an incessant appeal to arms, unless they observed some external respect for the forms of justice. Other causes, too, had imperceptibly diminished the passion for slaughter which marked their predatory mode of life. A love of luxury was springing up amongst them. The change from a roving, marauding, and wild state to that of permanent location, brought with it a corresponding desire for ease, and a cultivation of luxurious habits. Public breaches of good faith would have been attended with vexatious consequences and endless disturbance; and it is likely that in such a frame of mind, the Tartars preferred the secret assassination, which entailed no results, to the open murder of the Russian princes, which must have produced an attempt at retaliation. Alexander Nevsky's ascendancy at home was becoming too great to be endured: in him they discovered, for the first time, the fruit of the error they had committed, when they restored the grand princedom; and seeing, in all its perils, the danger of putting him to death before the eyes of his country, they granted him the favour he sought, and sent him home with his death-warrant in his veins.

Alexander Nevsky was one of the few great men whose names stand apart from the tumultuous throng

that crowd the early pages of Russian history. He was a wise statesman, and a brave soldier. His victories over the enemies of his country were not less remarkable for completeness and brilliancy, than his measures of domestic improvement were distinguished by prudence and foresight. The Danes, the Swedes, the Lithuanians, and the Teutonic knights severally gave way before him: he enlarged the bounds of his territory, inspired his army with a fresh spirit of activity, rebuilt several Russian cities that had been destroyed during the Tartar invasions, and founded others in well-chosen situations. Russia, under his sway, might have redeemed her fallen fortunes; but the unnatural hostility of the feudal princes to the grand princedom, their hatred to any chief whose virtues elevated him above them, and their ruinous conflicts amongst themselves upon insignificant grounds of quarrel, paralysed the efforts of Alexander, and deprived him of the power of rendering that service to the empire which he was eminently qualified to confer. His fame was so universal, that his death gave opportunity to the display of a fresh burst of superstitious feelings. His approaching decease was said to have been notified to the metropolitan by a voice from heaven; and as the body lay in the coffin, the dead man was said to have opened one of his hands, as the prayer of absolution was spoken by the officiating clergyman. These miracles obtained Alexander a niche amongst the Russian saints; and, less in honour of his real merits than his attributed powers, he was duly canonised after death. Some centuries subsequently, a monastery was raised to his memory by Peter I., and his relics were removed to St. Petersburg with extraordinary ceremonies of devotion. An order of knighthood was afterwards instituted in his name, which ranks amongst its members some of the monarchs of Europe. These facts connected with the reputation of Alexander Nevsky in Russia are memorable, as proofs of the veneration in which he was held,

and which was transmitted through so many ages, even down to our own day.

With the death of Alexander commenced afresh the hurtful contests of the princes for the grand princedom. The division of interests which had gradually grown up amongst the Tartars, greatly increased the internal disorders of Russia. Nogay, the Tartar chieftain, who had thrown off the rule of the khan of Kaptschak, asserted his sovereignty in the southern provinces, and contended against his rival of the horde for the right to tribute in many districts which had hitherto acknowledged implicitly the government of the first conqueror. This strife between the ruling powers produced much treachery amongst the Russian princes, who generally allied themselves to the chief who happened at the moment to obtain the ascendancy, and who thus played a false game to assist them in the accomplishment of their own individual objects. In this way they wasted their strength; for whenever a prince profited by the sale of his allegiance, he paid so dearly for the assistance which procured him the end he had in view, that the gain in such a case was usually discovered to be a severe loss. The grand princedom was the prize for which they all struggled; and in the contentions which marked the struggle, almost every inferior principality became more enfeebled than before.

About the beginning of the fourteenth century, after many events of rapid action, which influenced the circumstances of the country only by spreading to a greater extent the calamities of misrule and dissension, the grand principality devolved, pretty nearly in the order of succession, upon the princes of Twer, a small principality, where they continued to reside after they ascended the throne. By this unwise transference of the seat of their authority, they gave opportunity to the growth of a new power, which was ultimately destined to assume an important part in the scene of domestic feud.

Between Vladimir and Twer lay the principality of Moscow, a town and district concerning the original

building and settlement of which there is much variety of assertion amongst historical writers.* At first it was dependent upon the grand principality; on the irruption of the Tartars it was over-run in common with the rest of the country; and it was ultimately erected into a separate appanage. Its position rendered it a formidable obstacle to the princes of Twer. As it precisely intercepted the line of communication between Twer and Vladimir, its princes had the power, in a great measure, to harass, and restrict the movements of the grand prince, and even, with the aid of the Novgorodians, to reduce the sovereign authority to the bounds of Twer. This, the obvious use to which their advantage might be turned, was perceived and acted upon by Yury, the prince of Moscow, whose ambition led him to aspire to the grand princedom.

It was evident that the unaided resources of Moscow could not long maintain an offensive war against the prince of Twer, whose territories nearly enclosed the whole of the insurgent principality; but Yury, who was well aware of the actual inferiority of his physical power, resorted to the old means of improving them by a servile attendance upon the khan, whose favour he propitiated by bribery and artifice. So skilfully did he insinuate himself into the khan's good opinion, that he not only succeeded in obtaining a promise of succour in his design upon the grand prince — which succour was in itself decisive of the result — but in gaining the hand of the Tartar princess, sister to Usbek, the reigning khan, in marriage. This bond of union — a closer con-

* One of those pleasant romantic episodes that sometimes find their way into the pages of grave history, assigns the origin of Moscow to a love affair of one of the grand princes According to the legend, the grand prince heard of a chieftain who held a domain in those parts, and whose wife was remarkable for her beauty. Being desirous to see this wonder, whose fame was on every one's lips, the prince ordered the chieftain and the lady to appear before him; but the chieftain, suspecting the design, refused to obey. The grand prince, unaccustomed to such contumacy, seized upon the chieftain, and put him to death. There was now no obstacle to the gratification of the prince's curiosity. He visited the lady, and was so struck with her singular loveliness that he became constant and assiduous in his attentions, often remaining in the district for a long time with his suite. By degrees the population of the place increased as the prince continued to sojourn in it: houses sprang up, the court followed the sovereign, and at last the city of Moscow arose, which was afterwards destined to become the seat of empire.

nection with the conquerors than any Russian prince had hitherto contemplated—enabled Yury to advance in great strength against Michael, the grand prince, whose situation was rendered still more desperate by the defection of the Novgorodians, in consequence of some acts of oppression he had recently enforced against them. Even under these disadvantages, Michael was enabled to make head against the enemy; and, after having repulsed them with considerable slaughter, succeeded in making prisoners of the Tartar princess, and Kavadgi, the Tartar general who was commissioned by Usbek-Khan to put Yury in possession of the grand princedom. This victory, however, proved fatal to the unfortunate and virtuous Michael. The princess, shortly after the battle, expired at Twer; and, although there is no evidence on record to justify a suspicion that Michael was accessary to her death, the circumstance was seized upon with avidity as affording a good excuse for the terrible revenge of the defeated chief. Yury immediately accused him of having poisoned his consort; and Usbek followed up the accusation by summoning him to appear at the Horde to answer for the crime. Michael, strong in his own rectitude, despatched one of his sons to the khan to tender to him the assurance of his hearty devotion, and to lay before him a detailed explanation of the treachery of the prince of Moscow. But Usbek was inexorable, and insisted upon the personal appearance of the grand prince to meet the charge. The sons of Michael, anticipating nothing but evil from this resolution of the khan, begged to be permitted to go in their father's place; but Michael, sensible of the inutility of opposing the will of the Tartar any farther, would not consent to this noble sacrifice of filial piety; and, after having made his testament with all the solemnity of a dying man, set out on his journey for the Horde. The very boldness of his frank demeanour was an argument in his favour, which he sought to improve by rich presents to Usbek-Khan, and by energetic representations of his innocence. Yury, however, had been before hand with him, and had prejudiced all the chieftains

against him. A court was regularly convened to sit in judgment upon him, and at its head was placed the Tartar general who had been defeated in battle by the accused, while the vanquished Yury was put forward as the accuser. The injustice of this array was overwhelming. The grand prince had little mercy to expect; and after a trial which exhibited no more than the mere form of a judicial tribunal, Michael was condemned to death. Usbek-Khan, however, felt some compunction at the sternness of these proceedings, as after having originally favoured the claim of Michael to the grand princedom, it was through his subsequent treachery he was reduced to his present situation; and, perhaps to satisfy his conscience, as much as to make a show of justice towards a man who was so generally popular, he ordered a new court to be formed to hear the case. Of course the new court was no better than the old: the same spirit animated both; for Yury was in favour, and had already won the voices of the judges. Michael was again capitally convicted, and kept in chains for twenty-five days under his ignominious sentence. His sons were permitted to visit him, as well as his confessor and friends; but at last the executioner closed the scene, and one of the Russian princes was decapitated, for the first time, after a judicial trial in the Golden Horde.

Barbarous as this transaction must appear, yet it carries with it evidence of some slight improvement in the bearing of the Tartars towards the Russians. At no very remote time from the period of Michael's execution, about 1320, a Russian prince would not have been treated with so much formality under a grave accusation. The unprincipled chieftains of the Horde had not been in the habit of extending such distinction to those upon whom their suspicions or their enmities fell. Instead of having been heard before a tribunal—however inadequate to the ends of justice, and however corrupt in its composition—the accused would have been put to death first, and sentenced after, if sentenced at all.

The death of Michael procured for Yury the object of his complicated deceit. He was now seated upon the throne of the grand princedom. But the circumstances by which he procured his advancement, raised up against him the hand that was speedily to cast him down from his disgraceful elevation. The whole of Yury's conduct, throughout the trial, and subsequently to it, was marked by mingled cruelty and hypocrisy. When the body of the unfortunate Michael lay naked and bleeding in his tent after execution, Yury gazed upon it with a coldness that only hid his secret pleasure. Even the Tartar general who was instrumental to the prince's death, was struck with horror at his insensibility, and, reproaching him with it, exclaimed, "How canst thou gaze so unfeelingly upon the corpse of thy aged kinsman?" Yury replied to this reproof by a stroke of cunning, and, affecting to lament the deed which was exclusively of his own instigation, ordered the body to be conveyed in mournful state into Russia. This exhibition of heartless hypocrisy increased the hatred which his atrocities had already provoked, and the eldest son of the murdered sovereign availed himself of every means in his power, from time to time, to bring Yury under the displeasure of the khan. He constantly represented the proceedings of Yury in the worst light; and impressed the khan with a suspicion that certain movements which were in progress at Vladimir, having for their immediate object the aggrandisement of the principality, were really preliminary to a meditated declaration of independence. By arguments such as these, which were strongly borne out by appearances, the khan was induced to put Yury on his defence; and as that ill-starred prince was making his way into the Horde to meet the charges of his adversaries, the young accuser rushed upon him and ran his sword through his body. This act of personal revenge, by which the avenger adopted the same weapon of injustice against which he warred, was punished by the khan with immediate execution; and Alexander, the second son of Michael, and prince of Twer, was appointed grand prince.

In 1326, Alexander entered upon his functions; but he was scarcely a year in the enjoyment of the honours of sovereignty, when a report reached him that the Tartars resident in Twer had entered into a plot to murder him. This report was probably contrived by Ivan, prince of Moscow, and brother to Yury, who inherited all that hatred to the race of Michael which his predecessor had exhibited: but Alexander, who was unable to trace it to its true source, or to satisfy himself of its authenticity, considered that the best way to meet such a design was to anticipate it; and accordingly issued sentence of death against all the Tartars resident within his principality, except such as thought fit to embrace the Christian faith. An act of such indiscriminate atrocity could not fail to excite the indignation of Usbek-Khan; the more particularly, as amongst the slain was a near kinsman of his own. His retribution was complete. He drove Alexander from the throne, and gave his hereditary principality to a rival chief, upon whom he enjoined the gratifying office of pursuing the outlawed prince wherever he went, and of delivering him up into the hands of the outraged Tartars. In the meanwhile Ivan availed himself of his opportunity, and succeeded in obtaining his nomination to the vacated sovereignty. Alexander, hunted by the Tartars, and avoided by the Russians, wandered in a state of destitution through the country; but that spirit of caprice, which so often in the annals of the northern nations reduced the authority of a ruler one day, but to reinstate it on the day succeeding, inspired Usbek-Khan to undo what he had done, and to restore the exile to his possessions. His reign, however, was short-lived; for the animosity of Ivan pursued him to the end, and excited so fiercely the renewed wrath of the khan, that Alexander was scarcely recalled to the grand princedom when he was invited to the Horde, where he and his son were put to death.

Such were the vicissitudes that marked this period of Tartar domination in Russia.

CHAP. XI.

ACCESSION OF IVAN I. — HE UNDERTAKES THE COLLECTION OF THE TAXES, AND CONTEMPLATES THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE EMPIRE UNDER ONE HEAD. — HE ACCUMULATES CONSIDERABLE WEALTH. — SUBTLETY AND SUCCESS OF HIS POLICY. — PARTITION OF THE EMPIRE BETWEEN SIMEON AND IVAN II. — FRESH CHANGES IN THE GRAND PRINCEDOM. — THE LINE OF SUCCESSION IS PRESERVED. — FISCAL SYSTEM. — DMITRY DONSKOI. — INCREASED POWER IS GIVEN TO THE BOYARDS. — THE GOLDEN HORDE IS BROKEN UP. — THE PRINCES OF THE EMPIRE UNITE AGAINST THE TARTARS. — BATTLE OF THE DON. — REPRISALS. — DESTRUCTION OF MOSCOW. — ACCESSION OF VASSILY. — TAMERLANE DESCENDS UPON RUSSIA. — PRINCE YURY REBELS, AND DRIVES VASSILY THE BLIND FROM THE THRONE. — THE PRINCE IS RESTORED BY A GREAT POPULAR MOVEMENT.

IVAN I., surnamed Kalita, or the Purse, having succeeded so completely in his designs against his rival, was now called to the throne. With him commenced a new period in the fortunes of the country. Having acquired the supremacy by artifice, he held and enlarged it by a series of acts of monstrous injustice and unprincipled intrigue, which, however, led to the most fortunate results. In addition to the principality of Vladimir, Usbek-Khan bestowed Novgorod upon him; and these strong holds, with Moscow under his control, gave him a power which had not been enjoyed by any of his predecessors.

It was evident in the first struggle between the antagonist lines of Twer and Moscow, that whichever of them should gain over the good will of the Tartars must have obtained the ascendancy. The princes of Twer, who either did not fully discern the policy of preserving the friendship of the Tartars, or were too proud to seek it by artful means, observed a loose and indifferent course of conduct towards them — sometimes accepting their protection, and as often spurning it with contempt.

On the other hand, the princes of Moscow sedulously cultivated the alliance of the khan, propitiated his favour with rich gifts, and in his name over-ran such districts as exhibited symptoms of disaffection; showing on all occasions, and by every available means, their attachment and allegiance to his government and person. That they secretly entertained as deep a hatred to their foreign masters as those princes who betrayed their feelings indiscreetly, the sequel of their policy satisfactorily proved; but they well knew that the assistance of the Tartars was necessary in the first instance to the aggrandisement and security of their own possessions, before they could venture with any hope of success to assert their independence. In proportion as they extended their authority, the other principalities fell away; and as this decline of the individual power of the native princes was rapidly facilitating their ultimate project, by weakening the power of resistance from within, so, too, the gradual division and breaking up of the Tartar Horde into separate khannats, each claiming a share of the empire, reduced the power of control from without.

Ivan became in all respects the lieutenant and representative of the khan in Russia. He undertook to collect the taxes; and, in the execution of this office, he carefully availed himself of the manifold opportunities it afforded him of subjugating, by heavier imposts than even the khan contemplated, all those parts of Russia that yet pretended to resist his will. Those taxes he never paid into the Tartar exchequer; so that he not only extended his empire by these means, but amassed considerable wealth, which enabled him to extend it still farther. By the moneys thus acquired, he was soon rich enough to purchase new domains; to fix the protection of Usbek-Khan, who was always open to bribes; and to procure the great favour from the primate, of removing his residence from Vladimir to Moscow, thus making the latter city the capital of the empire.

The geographical position of Moscow was essentially favourable to the grand design of consolidation. It formed the central point of those districts, which, lying close in the neighbourhood of Vladimir, might be expected to form a union of interests with the grand principality; and that union being accomplished by the appointment of a Moscovite prince to the sovereignty, while some of his own connections nominally held the Moscow principality, the concentration of means, so long wanted to free the empire from its oppressors, was at last obtained; and it only required harmony amongst the heads of those districts, and a consistent course of prudent measures, to extract from such favourable circumstances all the benefits they contained. Fortunately for Russia, Ivan had cunning enough to perceive his advantage, and firmness enough to keep it.

He played the Russians against the Tartars with the most consummate skill. Wherever he penetrated in Russia, he was armed with the Tartar authority, which procured him immediate submission; and whenever he went to the Horde, which he frequently did, he bought up the khan with Russian gold. Between both, he was the sole gainer. By arts such as these, he was able to combine the princes of the appanages, the Tartar armies, and the thunder of the church, against the outcast prince of Twer, whom he first drove out of Russia, and next sacrificed on the threshold of the khan's tent. The terror of his name increased daily; until at last he became so identified with the paramount authority, that the petty princes insensibly made him the arbiter in their quarrels, while their dependants, attracted by his munificence, abandoned their poor domains, and crowded round his standard. The example of adhesion shown by the clergy in the first instance, was soon imitated by the lords of the soil; and, finally, Ivan might be said to reign over the whole of Russia through the instrumentality of his boyards, whom he had distributed throughout the empire.

Events that were taking effect at this period in distant

parts of the empire, fortuitously assisted the ambitious schemes of Ivan. The Lithuanians, who had formerly sunk under the yoke of Russia, had been enabled, during the confusion of the Tartar invasion, to emancipate themselves from thraldom, and were now acquiring considerable strength. The dissensions of the great empire afforded them leisure to strengthen their own dominions, and to make occasional inroads on the frontier districts. In 1320, Guedimin, a Lithuanian leader, possessed himself of those southern and western appanages which had thrown off the authority of the grand princedom; and this proof of the helplessness of Kief and its neighbouring principalities suggested to the Poles and the Hungarians the notable project of wresting from the Lithuanians their new acquisitions. Those places, therefore, were doomed to change masters in turn, as the fortune of a battle decided their fate; and the inhabitants, filled with despair by the disasters that accumulated upon them, fled from their desolate homes to colonise new regions, or to tender their services and fealty to the grand prince at Moscow.*

All these circumstances conspired to strengthen the hands of Ivan. If the empire lost in extent by the subjugation of its remote and rebellious provinces, the grand principality gained an increase of population, and a concentration of resources; while the number of its domestic enemies were reduced in proportion. The loss of a few appanages might be easily recovered at a future time from a foreign foe, who would be, at the worst, a less formidable adversary than a domestic rival.

The indefensible character of Ivan's policy, in a moral point of view, must be admitted at once: he did not hesitate at any violation of truth to gain his ends; and he waged war against his kinsmen with quite as much

* A body of the emigrants formed two military republics, one of which was that of the Don Cossacks. The discontented of all nations joined them; and their situation between the Turks and the Tartars, two people united, observes Segur, by a religion, origin, and interest in common, enabled them at first to embarrass the communication of those powers, and finally to make head against them.

ferocity as he should have done against the bitterest enemies of his country. But this bold and confident mode of proceeding had the effect of tranquillising Russia, of repressing the arrogance of the princes, and of lulling the suspicions of the Tartars. So long as there existed no predominant power to crush the idle feuds that checked the improvement of the appanages, so long must the empire have continued to be preyed upon by adventurers from abroad, and spoliators at home. But the sceptre once grasped with firmness, the insignificant contentions disappeared, and some show of order was restored. It is a remarkable fact, that in the midst of these scenes of tyranny commerce began to flourish anew; extensive markets and fairs were established in different parts of the country, and all the luxuries of the East, of Italy, and Greece were to be found in profusion in places where traffic was hitherto scarcely known. An old chronicler* states, that at the great mart of Mologa on the Volga, the commerce of Asia and Europe met in the seventy inns of its Slavonian suburb; and that at that place alone the duties paid to the prince amounted to 7200 pounds' weight of silver. There is no doubt that these springs of national prosperity were encouraged by Ivan on account of the enormous revenues they produced; for as he advanced by degrees beyond the reach and cognizance of the khan, he inflicted heavy imposts on all saleable articles, the proceeds from which were reserved by him for his own use. According to some authorities, he received the surname of Kalita, or the Purse, on account of his great wealth: according to other writers, because he always caused a purse filled with money for the poor to be carried before him through the streets. However, it is certain that he was possessed of so much treasure as to be enabled to bequeath at his death a sufficient sum to his eldest son to purchase from the khan the right of succession to the throne, besides other considerable legacies equally divided between his two sons.

It would appear that some injunction to preserve the

* Kamenevitch.

integrity of the grand-princedom accompanied these bequests, for his two sons vowed on the sepulchre of their ancestors to preserve a peaceable participation of the united principalities between them: Simeon, surnamed the Proud, taking the title and dignities of grand prince, with one half of the revenues; and Ivan, his brother, remaining as prince of Moscow, with the other half. That vow they kept religiously; and the happy consequences were every where visible in the general establishment of peace and safety to the institutions that were slowly growing up throughout the country. Simeon reigned for thirteen years, pursuing the policy laid down by his father in all its essential features, except that the state of subordination to which the principalities had been already brought, and the constant accession of subjects from the unsettled districts to the grand principality, rendered the adoption of coercive measures the less necessary.

On the death of Simeon, Ivan II. his brother purchased the sovereignty; for that was really the condition upon which the khan gave his assent to the nomination. The influence of his father's example still prevailed, although neither of his sons possessed sufficient ability to push farther towards independence. Money continued to be accumulated, and order was still preserved, although occasional infractions of the unity of the government were attempted by some insurgent princes, who were, however, speedily made to feel the false policy, as well as inutility, of such demonstrations of discontent. The principal object of this aggrandisement of the princedom was to give to the successors of the founder of the dynasty the means of preserving the sovereign authority in the line of the princes of Moscow. And that object, with one brief exception, was completely attained; so that all the advantages of unbroken succession, and the perpetuation of a consistent course of adminstration, were thus acquired by the exercise of a rigid system in the collection of exorbitant taxes.

The exception to this succession was in the person of prince Dmitry, of the Nevsky branch, who was nominated to the grand princedom by a mere whim of

Naurus-khan; but his reign was so short, and in all respects so feeble, that it effected no change whatever in the principles of the government, or the disposition of the people. He was deposed in 1362 by Murath khan, who elected in his stead Dmitry Donskoi, son of Ivan II. This prince, a man of keen judgment, and ambitious temper, resolved to establish the order of succession inviolate for the future; and one of the first acts of his government was to obtain the consent of the subsidiary princes to a measure in which the welfare of the whole empire was deeply involved. His uncle, Vladimir the Brave, one of the most influential princes in Russia, was the first to sign a treaty engaging to pay to the grand prince the tribute of his appanage, hitherto paid invariably to the khan; and in another treaty the same prince undertook that his boyards should pay to Dmitry any tax which he might think proper to impose upon his own boyards. Vladimir also entered into other conventions, by which he acknowledged himself the vassal of Dmitry; and, as a final settlement of the question of the succession, he bound himself in similar terms to Vassili, his son; and even to Vassili's son, then only five years of age. An example so powerful was speedily followed by the rest of the Russian princes; and they all consented to renounce the mode of succession from brother to brother and to acknowledge in its stead the more natural order of from father to son. The promptitude of Dmitry in demanding this important concession from the princes of the dependent appanages, was mainly conducive to that monarchical unity which the Tartars had more reason to dread than all the acts of violence and rebellion that were ever offered against their arms.

The progressive influence of the wealth of the grand princedom began now to be perceptibly felt. The preservation of the direct line of the succession gave to that great agent of power a practical direction, and a consistent operation. The wealth of the princes, at first wisely bestowed in purchasing the good will of the horde, became at length sufficient to enable its possessors to keep up a body of regular troops, so efficient and numerous

that they could at any moment make head against rebellion or invasion. On one occasion they dedicated a part of their treasure to enfeoff from the crown lands 300,000 boyard followers.

From the first lapse of the Tartars into a state of courtly indolence, the spirit of the Russians, greatly repressed at intervals, and only showing signs of life at intermittent periods, gave tokens of revival. So long as the barbarian conquerors ruled their dependencies with a rod of iron, decimating and destroying with relentless cruelty, it was impossible for the independence of the country to be achieved. It was the policy of the Tartars, as we have seen, to encourage the domestic feuds which separated the people into factions, and prevented them from acquiring that strength which comes of cooperation; and also to keep the church on their side, because its influence over the superstitious population was equal to the more expensive machinery of a standing army. Content in the first instance with having reduced all the principalities to subjection, they permitted the native princes to wield their barren sceptres under the imposition of a heavy tribute. The payment of the tribute in some measure released these petty sovereigns from that implicit obedience which, under a more arbitrary and inquisitorial levy, they must have observed towards their task-masters; and although it did not release them sufficiently to leave them the full exercise of their free will, it placed them in a position to profit by the delegated authority vested in their hands. They were allowed to collect the tribute as they might from their subjects *; and, converting that privilege to

* In 1831, the sultan adopted a principle of municipal organisation in European Turkey, which in many respects resembled the policy of the khans at this period in their government of Russia, and which is worthy of being attentively considered on account of the antiquity of its origin. The adoption of this wise mode of collecting the revenues preserved Albania to the Sublime Porte, which was more important than the successful stand made against Ali Pacha. The Servians and Greeks were independent, and the whole of Albania was up in arms. In this extremity, the sultan despatched the grand vizir, an able man, into the rebellious territory, investing him with unlimited authority. Although the difficulties against which that officer had to contend were alarming, he was fortunate enough to ob-

their own advantage, they raised a larger revenue than was necessary to discharge their feudal obligation, reserving to themselves whatever surplus remained. The Tartars, perceiving the mistake they had committed in permitting the fiscal trust to be placed in the hands of the princes, revoked their original settlement, and, shifting the levy from the prince to his subjects, enacted a property tax, which they appointed officers of their own to collect. The insolence of the collectors, and the new description of oppression which this unusual mode of raising the revenue introduced, generated general discontent, and the firmness and politic address of Alexander Nevsky alone preserved the empire from a second inundation of the hordes. These events, however, exhibited to the Russians the weak point of the Tartars. It was evident that the acquisition of wealth was the paramount object of the khans. The demands of their luxurious way of living gave a fictitious importance to money; and the Russians saw, that if they could obtain the means of bribing their oppressors, the gradual recovery of their political independence would cease to be chimerical. Ivan I. put this principle into practice, without appearing to distrust the friendship or to diminish the power of the khans. By the mere force of the largesses he laid at the feet of the Tartar, he was enabled to win over the church to his interests; and under his rule we have seen the union of the sceptre and

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tain a speedy settlement, and to re-establish the authority of his master, by substituting a property tax for all the exactions that had previously been levied, and by sweeping away the whole machinery of collection by the Turkish pachas and their numerous trains of petty officers, and the dervenagas, guards of the mountains, who were no better than banditti, mulcting the people in many vexatious ways in the name of the government, and subsisting upon their impositions. In place of these obnoxious officers, the grand vizir reposed the collection of the revenue in the hands of the municipal authorities, and appointed a military police, and treasurers, whose only duty it was to receive the taxes. Thus the population was empowered to administer its own fiscal regulations, freed from the presence of Turkish control, and without appeal to Turkish law or authority. These financial institutions, which soften the worst features of taxation, constitute the fundamental principles of Arabic legilsation, and are reverenced as the constitutional and traditional doctrines of Islamism. For a full exposition of the working of this system amongst the Hellenic and Slavonian races inhabiting European Turkey, see Urquhart's "Turkey and its Resources."

the mitre take place without exciting the least jealousy or suspicion on the part of the Horde. By the influence which Ivan procured through his costly offerings, he succeeded in obtaining a reversal of the mode of collecting the levy, and in procuring the recall of the obnoxious Tartar officers. He took upon himself to enforce and pay the tribute; and as he exacted a much larger amount than his occasions required, he lulled the doubts of the khan by superadding to the stipulated payments the most splendid voluntary gifts. Being thus permitted to hold an undisputed and almost irresponsible sovereignty, he took care to improve his opportunities by subjugating the whole of Russia to his will.

Such were the circumstances under which Dmitry ascended the throne. He clearly perceived the extraordinary progress towards a concentration of the resources of the empire that had been made in the two previous reigns, and his earliest care was to carry it still farther by securing the right of succession in a direct line, so that the same course of policy might with the more certainty be transmitted without deviation. This wise measure was useful in every way. It had the effect of consolidating the common interests, which had hitherto been sacrificed to unseemly contentions; while it gave to the reigning prince a greater stake in tranquillity and conservation, since he felt that the labours of government were directed to the maintenance of the rights of his children, which, of course, were dearer to him than the rights of nephews, or brothers, or strangers. The heir, too, had the example of his father to emulate, and a similar motive actuated him on behalf of his successor. The establishment of the hereditary principle was, also, more acceptable to the nobles, who, dwelling about the court, were solicitous to cultivate the favour of the acknowledged heir, in order that the personal attachments which grew out of habitual intercourse should descend to their children, who might thus in turn succeed to the dignities enjoyed by their fathers. In fact, the old order of succession, from brother to brother, was hate-

ful to the boyards of the grand principality, as the new prince was always attended by the boyards of his own appanage, for whom he was forced to provide by displacing all those whom he already found stationed at the capital.

Thus the places about the court became transmissible in certain families, who were gradually elevated in consequence, by the security which was attached to their rank. That security, which bound them the more firmly to the reigning prince, gave them as great a degree of power as that which was enjoyed by the petty princes of the appanages *, so that the strength of the grand princedom was infinitely increased by a system which interested in its preservation so many of the leading chiefs and their immediate followers. The boyards, in many instances, superseded the princes in their offices · sometimes they acted as lieutenants in the principalities; and it was not unfrequent to find a boyard at the head of an army instead of a prince, which had formerly been the invariable custom.

The policy of Dmitry in reference to this class, which constituted what must be considered as the nobility of Russia, was remarkable for circumspection and prudence. He gave a distinct authority to the boyards throughout all the principalities, and as they thus acquired an interest in the permanency and safety of the grand princedom, it was natural that they should defend it even at the expense of the prince under whom they directly served.

In 1392, the boyards of Roris, the last prince of Suzdal, surrendered up him and his appanage to the grand prince; and on another occasion, when the tysiatsky of Moscow, or officer of the commons, who was elected by the people, and held a sort of mixed civil and military court, fell under the displeasure of the boyards, Dmitry abolished the office at once. We find, too, that

* Dmitry Donskoi, when he addressed his boyards for the last time, after recommending them to the protection of his sons, emphatically observed, "Under my reign you were not boyards, but really Russian princes."

when two minorities occurred, the boyards of Moscow formed the council of regency; thus taking into their own hands the temporary sovereignty of the country.

The recognition of a resident authority in the boyards contributed, by the creation of so many links of connection and communication throughout the empire, to the complete subjugation of the princes, and the final admission of the actual sovereignty of the prince of Moscow. And this desirable result was hastened to its consummation by the rapid breaking up of the horde into rival khannats. The Tartar force was no longer the formidable power it had been when its bands were united under one head. Discord had scattered its armies into several divisions. If an insurgent prince desired to obtain redress against the domestic sovereign, he was at a loss to know to which of the Tartar khans, for there were now many, he should apply. The journey to the Golden Horde, which originally inspired the grand princes with terror, now only served to show them the inherent weakness of the Tartars; and instead of returning home shackled by new impositions, and filled with despair, they returned in secret triumph, and in a spirit of renewed confidence in their growing strength. The petty princes who sought succour from the Tartars felt that it could not be obtained without incurring a greater evil than any which it might avert; for it was not so much calculated to procure them the protection of one master, as it was likely to excite the cupidity of several masters. When any competitor for the sovereignty presented himself at the horde to seek the sanction of the khan to his demand, he was dismissed with an envoy or a letter, which demonstrated that the hand of the despot was paralysed. In this state of affairs, the chiefs of the appanages saw that the only source of authority and protection that remained lay in the grand prince, and that to avail themselves of it had ceased to be a matter of choice, and had literally become a matter of necessity. Exposed on all sides to the inroads of the brigand Tartars, and looking in vain for a

rallying point in their disjointed hosts, they were compelled to fly for aid to Moscow. The terms of the grant were arbitrary. The grand prince, persuaded of the importance of his station, required implicit submission from the dependent chiefs; they, unable to decline and forced to acquiesce, willingly acknowledged his supremacy; and thus all the princes of the empire became vassals to Dmitry.

The principality of Twer held out the longest against the recognition of the supreme authority. Mikhail of Twer, aided by his son-in-law, the ferocious Olguerd, prince of Lithuania, and conqueror of many provinces, four times rose victorious against Dmitry, and was four times vanquished in turn. During this war, which was terrible in its progress, Moscow was twice besieged, but the great strength of the city enabled it to repel the invader. At last Olguerd died, and Dmitry, who had now gained over the Russian princes to his side, possessed himself of the last of the rebellious appanages. The confederation of his kinsmen, and the increasing necessity for strengthening the hands of the grand prince against the Tartars, prevailed over the personal ambition of the prince of Twer, and he willingly submitted to the power, against which it was impolitic to offer any further resistance.

During these diversions of the Russian arms at home, finally terminating in an alliance dictated by common interest, and cemented by an universal desire to oppose a combined force against the Tartars, that power was wasting its resources in frequent and sanguinary dissensions. The Tartars of the Kaptschak were already divided into several hordes, assuming the titles of their chiefs, or of the localities over which they individually asserted sovereignty. Mamai, the khan of the Tartars of the Don, claimed the paramount authority, and levied tribute upon Dmitry; but, seeing that that prince was making rapid strides towards the liberation of the empire, he resolved to adopt immediate measures for reestablishing, by force of arms, the Tartar despotism in

Russia. This project was hardly formed, when Dmitry obtained intelligence of the khan's designs through his numerous spies at the horde, who afforded him such timely and constant information as enabled him to collect around him all the dependent princes with their armed retainers. As these preparations advanced in Moscow, Mamai, apprehensive that the Russians might be in a condition to commence the attack before he should be able to meet them upon equal terms, despatched an embassy to the grand prince with some petty complaint about the smallness of the tribute money, but in reality to disguise his secret intentions, and to gain time for bringing his forces together. Dmitry, who perceived in this device of the Tartar the actual motive by which he was influenced, was yet unwilling to open hostilities so long as any reasonable excuse existed for keeping amicable terms; the more especially as the longer the collision was postponed the better for Russia, who was now recovering from the effects of her domestic struggles, and the worse for the Tartars, whose internal divisions were daily increasing. In pursuance of this determination, Dmitry despatched a counter-embassy to the horde of the Donskoi Tartars, who were instructed to appeal to the subsisting treaty, by which it was agreed that the amount of the tribute should be reduced. This brought the question to issue. There was no further opportunity for parley; and Mamai, driven to the last alternative, commanded the grand prince to appear before him in person, a summons which all experience had proved to be merely a preliminary to his execution.

If this point of etiquette had been yielded, it would have amounted to a tacit surrender of the empire. The princes were all united in the same view of the necessity of seizing upon this as the favourable moment for resistance: the demands of Mamai in the first instance were unjust, and in the second, tyrannical: there could no longer exist any pretext for misunderstanding his object: it was evident that he contemplated the overthrow of the growing independence of Russia; and that

the combination of the whole resources of the country was necessary to the vindication of its liberties. In addition to the pressing arguments which these considerations presented, the remembrance of the cruelties formerly practised by the Tartars, inspired the population with unbounded zeal in the common cause.

Another motive — the strongest of all — urged the people to embrace with avidity the policy of an offensive war. It was apprehended, with good reason, that the extirpation of Christianity would be one of the consequences of an invasion, and that if the Tartars once more obtained the ascendancy by forcible means, ecclesiastical property, which was guarded with superstitious veneration, would be confiscated in the general ruin. The clergy were therefore drawn into the universal declaration of hostility: the war was sanctioned by the voice of the primate and metropolitans, and designated as a holy struggle on behalf of the church as well as the state; and the cause of martyrdom was decreed beforehand to every man who fell in the righteous battle. Armed with the double zeal of the multitudes that flocked to his standard, Dmitry took the field at the head of 200,000 men. His answer to the command of the khan was a military demonstration on the banks of the Don.

The boldness of this step, the justice of his cause, and the prospect of approaching release from a bondage which every Russian abhorred, increased his force on the way from Moscow to the camp of the enemy. Every man capable of bearing arms in the line of route joined the army of liberation, and the women remained at home only to pray for the success of their gallant defenders.

Arrived at the banks of the river, Dmitry found the enemy encamped at no great distance on the opposite side. The choice now lay between awaiting the attack, or crossing the river and advancing at once upon the foe. He left the decision to his army, impressing upon them the eventful nature of the contest in which they

were engaged, and the important interests that hung upon the issue. With one voice they declared in favour of the attack ; and Dmitry immediately transported his battalions across the water, and when they were landed on the opposite shore, turned the vessels adrift, to cut off all hope of escape. This precaution was the more necessary to secure the desperate valour of his followers, as the Tartar army was nearly treble the amount of his, if we may credit the authority from which the statement is derived. The onslaught was commenced by the Russian troops with tremendous fury; and was met by the Tartars with equal valour. The multitudes that crowded the field rendered the battle promiscuous and bloody, and so impeded the regular efforts of the leaders on both sides, that numbers were trampled to death in the confusion. This was a clear gain to the Tartars, whose superior numbers enabled them to relieve the fallen battalions with fresh supplies of men, while the inferiority of the antagonist force deprived them of any advantages of that sort. Victory was apparently on the side of the Tartars. Their ferocious mode of fighting struck the Russians with terror, and their increasing squadrons, which it appeared impossible to reduce, seemed to make their efforts hopeless. In this situation, hemmed in on all quarters, the policy of closing the river to retreat was manifest. The certainty of being unable to escape, and the persuasion that death purchased in the battle was a prelude to immortal glory, inspired them with superhuman bravery. They fought more like demons than men ; but even this extraordinary display of courage could not have availed them had not Dmitry, whose foresight was exhibited in the whole disposition of the contest, stationed a detachment, as a reserve, to come up at the moment when the tide appeared to turn against him. The reserve fell upon the rear of the Tartars in the very crisis of their triumph; and such was the dismay it caused, mingled with vague apprehensions of a still greater force behind, that the ranks of the enemy gave way and fell into

disorder, of which the Russians took instant advantage, and renewed the fight with such determined spirit, that the Tartars fled from the field, with Mamai at their head, leaving the Russians in possession of a signal victory. The glory, however complete and important, was procured at a great cost. Thousands of the troops were slain; and it occupied the survivors eight days to bury the dead. The bodies of the Tartars never received the rights of sepulture.

It was in honour of this achievement that prince Dmitry received the surname of Donskoi, by which he is distinguished in history.

The consequences of the battle of the Don were lasting, and of the greatest moment to the future welfare of the empire. It proved that the Tartars were not invincible, and that, although Russia was not yet prepared to work out her perfect freedom, it only required unanimity in her councils to raise her to a place amongst the great nations of the earth. It was the first valid evidence of the decline of the gigantic power that had over-run the north, and devastated the scenes of their barbarian exploits; and it was received as a warning to co-operation, and an incitement to action, by all those petty princes who had hitherto suffered their own views to retard the universal cause of their country. It only remained for the grand prince and his successors to follow up the advantages of the event, in order to complete the benefits it shadowed forth.

The immediate and inevitable consequence of the battle was a sensible reduction of the Russian army. The numbers that fell before the Tartars could not be easily or speedily supplied: nor were the means of a fresh levy accessible. Those districts from which the grand army was ordinarily recruited had already exhausted their population; all the remote principalities had contributed in nearly equal proportion, and the majority of the rest of the empire was composed of persons who were unaccustomed to the use of arms, having been exclusively occupied in tillage or com-

merce. These circumstances, which did not damp the joy of the victory, or diminish its real importance, presented to the implacable foe a new temptation for crossing the border. But it was not until two of the wandering hordes had formed a junction that the Tartars were able to undertake the enterprise. The preparations for it occupied them two years. In 1382, the hordes of the Don and the Volga united, and making a descent upon the frontier provinces with success, penetrated as far as Moscow. The city had been previously fortified by the boyards with strong ramparts and iron gates; and Dmitry, trusting with confidence to the invincibility of the fortifications, left the capital in the charge of one of his generals, while he imprudently went into the interior to recruit his army. His absence in the hour of danger spread consternation amongst the peaceable part of the inhabitants, particularly the clergy, who relied upon his energies on the most trying occasions. The metropolitan, accompanied by a great number of the citizens, left the city upon the approach of the Tartars. The small garrison that remained made an ineffectual show on the ramparts, and the Tartars, who might not otherwise have gained their object, prevailed upon the timidity of the Russians, who consented to capitulate upon a promise of pardon. The Tartars observed their pledge in this instance as they had done in every similar case,—by availing themselves of the first opportunity to violate it. They no sooner entered Moscow than they gave it to the flames, and massacred every living person they met in the streets. Having glutted their revenge with a terrible scene of slaughter and conflagration, they returned home, satisfied with having reduced the grand princedom once more, after their own fashion, to subjection. They did not perceive that in this exercise of brutal rage they strengthened the moral power of Russia, by giving an increased motive to co-operation, and by rendering the abhorrence of their yoke still more bitter than before. All they

desired was the physical and visible evidence of superiority; either not heeding, or not comprehending, the silent and unseen progress of that strength which combined opinion acquires under the pressure of blind tyranny.

Dmitry, thus reduced to submission, was compelled once more to perform the humiliating penance of begging his dignity at the hands of the khan. Empire had just been within his grasp; he had bound up the shattered parts of the great mass; he had effected a union of sentiment, and a bond of co-operation; but in the effort to establish this desirable end, he had exhausted the means by which alone it could be perpetuated. Had the Tartars suffered a short period more to have elapsed before they resumed the work of spoliation, it is not improbable but that a sufficient force could have been raised to repel them: but they appeared in considerable numbers, animated by the wildest passions, at a time when Dmitry was unable to make head against their approach. The result was unavoidable; and the grand prince, in suing to be reinstated on the throne from which he was virtually expelled, merely acquiesced in a necessity which he could not avert.

But the destruction of Moscow had no effect upon the great principle that was now in course of development all over the empire. The grand princedom was still the centre of all the Russian operations: the grand prince was still the acknowledged authority to which all the subordinate rulers deferred. While this paramount virtue of cohesion remained unimpaired, the incursions of the Tartars, however calamitous in their passing visitations, had no other influence upon the ultimate destiny of the country than that of stimulating the latent patriotism of the population, and of convincing the petty princes, if indeed any further evidence were wanted, of the disastrous impolicy of wasting their resources in private feuds.

The example of Dmitry Donskoi had clearly pointed out the course which it was the policy of the grand

prince to follow; but, in order to place his own views beyond the reach of speculation, and to enforce them in as solemn a manner as he could upon his successors, that prince placed a last injunction upon his son, which he also addressed in his will to all future grand princes, to persevere in the lofty object of regeneration by maintaining and strengthening the domestic alliances of the sovereignty, and resisting the Tartars until they should be finally driven out of Russia. His reign of twenty-seven years, crowded with eventful circumstances, and subjected to many fluctuations, established two objects which were of the highest consequence to the ultimate completion of the great design. Amidst all the impediments that lay in his way, or that sprang up as he advanced, Dmitry continued his efforts to create an order of nobility — the boyards, who, scattered through every part of the empire, and surrounding his court on all occasions of political importance, held the keys of communication and control in their hands, by which the means of concentration were at all times facilitated. That was one object, involving in its fulfilment the gradual reduction of the power of the petty princes, and contributing mainly to the security of the second object, which was the chief agent of his designs against the Tartars. In proportion as he won over the boyards to his side, and gave them an interest in his prosperity, he increased the power of the grand princedom. These were the elements of his plan: the progressive concentration of the empire, and the elevation of the grand princedom to the supreme authority. The checks that he met in the prosecution of these purposes, of which the descent of the Tartar army upon Moscow was the principal, slightly retarded, but never obscured, his progress. The advances that he had made were evident. It did not require the attestation of his dying instructions to explain the aim of his life: it was visibly exemplified in the institutions he bequeathed to his country; in the altered state of society; and in the general submission of the appanages to a throne which, at the

period of his accession, was shaken to its centre by rebellion.

Vassily, the son of Dmitry, inherited, not the capacity to conceive these projects, but the ability to sustain the continuous progress of their development. He was a prince of an inflexible and haughty character, impatient of injuries, prompt to seek redress, and inexorable as a ruler. Russia could not have made a happier choice, if she had had the voluntary election of the sovereign. The stern line of conduct which Vassily pursued towards his own subjects, especially towards such of the princes as betrayed any symptoms of discontent, would have been harsh and oppressive under different circumstances; but, in the situation in which the empire was placed, surrounded on all sides by hostile troops, the rigid conservation of its internal resources was the first condition which it was the duty of the grand prince to consult. Vassily, educated amongst the boyards and the clergy, had early imbibed the doctrines of royalty: the aristocratic nature was palpable in all his proceedings; and its predominance in every measure of his government had the effect of sinking still deeper upon the popular mind the impression of the inalienable rights of the grand princedom.

While, however, he exhibited this proud and indomitable bearing to his own people, he observed towards his European and Asiatic neighbours a different course of policy. He perceived the necessity of treating all other enemies with caution, lest he might sacrifice his means of resisting the old enemies of the country. It was desirable to repress the Lithuanians, who had long harassed the western frontier, and possessed themselves of those districts that had thrown off their allegiance to the grand principality; but Vassily was son-in-law to the prince of Lithuania, and perhaps wisely resolved to combat him by political ingenuity rather than by force of arms, reserving his strength for collision with the Tartars, should so decisive a step become advisable. Thus, while Kief was fading into insignificance, Mos-

cow was rising in importance; and Vassily lost no opportunity of inspiring his countrymen with the terror of his power. He subdued seven unruly appanages, that were surrendered into his hands by the boyards; and, following the example of his predecessors, he journeyed to the horde to tender his delusive allegiance, and to purchase the investiture of the reduced principalities. The unfortunate princes who were thus, on the first show of disaffection, deprived of their appanages, were either compelled to do servile homage at Moscow, or to retire into exile. But the severity of these measures was conducive to the accomplishment of Russian policy.

While Vassily was watching and negotiating circumspectly with Vitovt, the Lithuanian, in the west, a new and more formidable enemy arose in the east: this was the ferocious Tamerlane *, who, at the head of 400,000 men, in 1398, had already subdued the Kaptschak, and advanced into Russia. The irruption of this powerful force on the one side, was rendered still more alarming by the rapid progress of Vitovt on the other. He had crushed the trembling population on the frontiers, surprised Smolensk, advanced upon Kaluga, and penetrated to Novgorod; while Tamerlane, with his irresistible army, after having traversed Persia on the shores of the Caspian sea, and beaten the combined Tartars in their own fastnesses on the Volga, had pushed his victorious march to the gates of Moscow. The very heart of the empire was now between two fires. The troops of Tamerlane had plundered the towns on their progress of all the treasures they possessed, and the Lithuanians had not been less sparing of the wealth and lives of the inhabitants. Whichever way Vassily

* The original name of this celebrated conqueror was Timur; but, to mark a defect of lameness which he had in his right foot, he was distinguished by the surname of Leuki By an easy transition, this name of Timurleuki was softened in Europe into Tamerlane. He was but a petty prince in Great Bulgaria; but, like Ghengis Khan, he spread his possessions over an enormous extent of country, carrying fire on his track, and tempting his multitudes onwards by an unlimited permission to ravage and plunder the lands they conquered.

turned, he saw destruction approaching. In the meeting of the antagonist invaders, Russia must have been sacrificed: at the moment, however, when the impending danger appeared to be most appalling, Tamerlane and Vitovt, as if moved by a simultaneous impulse, suddenly turned aside, retraced their progress, and the latter descending towards the Tartar horde, they both met in the south, and fell upon each other. This extraordinary movement was hailed as the result of a providential interposition. Relieved from the pressure that threatened extinction, Russia was miraculously recalled to life. She had strange foes from remote Asia to protect herself against, and the proceedings of Tamerlane became an object of the deepest interest. She expected that the treasures he had won in this first experiment on the north, would induce him to return; but, as if the overthrow of the Tartars was the only temptation that drew him out of the east, when she looked again towards the scene of action he had disappeared. When Kutlin, his lieutenant, had subdued the Lithuanians, Tamerlane, thirsting for richer spoils, directed his course towards India, where a golden harvest awaited his victorious arms.

Russia had not suffered so much in this sudden and rapid invasion, but that she could profit by the greater disasters it entailed upon the Tartars, upon whom the triumphs of Tamerlane had brought irremediable evils. Their forces were broken up and scattered, the seat of their empire pillaged, and their influence so reduced, that even the minor principalities ceased to look upon them with apprehension. These divisions and calamities, that thickened amongst the natural enemies of the empire, accelerated the advance of the independence of the grand princes. Every circumstance that caused tumults and weakness without, was an incentive to peace and a source of strength within. The hereditary order of succession was thus strengthened by the subsequent contests between Lithuania and Poland, which interrupted the regular dynasty, placed a democracy at

the head of affairs, and introduced the elective principle into the government.

The growth of the power of the sceptre, assisted by events that would appear to arrest rather than facilitate the advance of the sovereign authority, constitutes the chief feature of the reign of Vassily. Constantly employed between domestic excursions against the disturbed principalities, and occasional visits to the horde to pay for permission to retain his conquests over his own subjects, or to make atonement for some incidental burst of royal vanity, the life of the prince was an incessant scene of war, cruelty, and hypocrisy. Yet, through all these apparently unpropitious scenes, the ascendancy of the Muscovite rule continued to rise: it gained some small accession of territory or privilege at every turn of fortune; and Vassily at last became so confident of his security, that he had the hardihood to have himself crowned in the capital with all the honours of the imperial state. So open a breach of treaties still existing, and so direct an insult to the supremacy of the Tartars, was not to be endured; and Vassily, when he came to acknowledge his folly, accounted himself leniently treated to be permitted to resume his grand princedom on the ordinary condition of tendering his fealty afresh, and re-establishing the Tartar rule as before. This revolt was too soon and too sudden, and it failed. If, however, he was weak enough to betray the ultimate end of his policy by so inopportune an attempt to carry it into effect, he had sufficient wisdom to resign his pretensions at once; and, by a timely concession, prevent the Tartars from putting the affair to the issue of arms, which must have created new bonds for the empire.

After a reign of thirty-six years, during which period Vassily improved the actual resources of the throne, and preserved his father's principles, not in an unbroken and temperate line of policy, but by a headstrong perseverance through vicissitudes, this prince expired in 1425, bequeathing, with the sovereignty, his implacable

hostility against the Tartars, to his successor. His last acts were in the same spirit as his first: he required the Russian princes to make a vow that they would have no communication whatever with the Tartars or the Lithuanians, and compelled them to acknowledge his son Vassily, a boy only two years old, as the rightful and indisputable heir. Whoever refused to comply with these demands was banished from his appanage. The immediate assent of the princes to this requisition confirmed the power which was now discovering in its character some of the attributes of an autocracy.

That the church was warmly interested in the promotion of the claims of the grand princedom, was apparent in a great variety of facts, but in none more than the prophecy with which it pretended to herald the birth of the young prince Vassily. Vassilievitch, surnamed the Blind, a monk of Moscow, a creature of the primate's, affected to predict the birth of the grandson of Dmitry Donskoi, proclaiming that a voice from heaven announced to him that the lineal heir of the throne of Moscow should be grand prince of all Russia. The prophecy was received as a special revelation, which showed the high favour in which Russia stood with Providence, although it required very little sagacity to foresee so self-evident a conclusion as that the lineal heir should succeed to the throne. The pious forgery, no doubt, sprung from an anxious desire on the part of the clergy to avert, so far as such influence could, any confusion or intrigues that might be likely to arise during so long a minority as that which, it was probable, must ensue in the case of a prince born so late in the reign of his father. If that were the object of the prophecy,—and there does not appear to be any other reason which we can assign for it,—the good intentions of the clergy failed, for the succession to the throne was disputed almost as soon as it was attempted to be asserted.

There were a few amongst the boyards, but the number was limited to those who anticipated some per-

sonal advantage from the change, who desired to return to the old order of succession, by which the fraternal right was maintained. Yury, prince of Galitsch, uncle of the young prince, and brother to Vassily, relying upon his own followers for support, appealed to the ancient principle, and claimed the throne. So unexpected an interruption to the admitted line roused the energies of the church into action; the clergy, irritated at such a contumacious defiance of their voice from heaven, arrayed themselves against the new claimant, and disseminated their zeal abroad amongst the people. The primate, who, as was usual, had proclaimed the young sovereign, and summoned the princes of the appanages to acknowledge his authority, uttered a terrible excommunication against the rebellious Yury; but the anathema must have fallen hurtless upon the chief, had not an opportune pestilence interfered to suspend his movements, and check the hostile preparations. As soon as the contagiòn disappeared, however, Yury resumed his claim, and proceeded, together with Vassily and his dependants, to the Grand Horde, to dispute the revived question of the sovereignty. The boyards who accompanied the young prince, being deeply interested in the permanence of a system from which they derived all their consequence, and being particularly concerned in the issue of the controversy on this occasion, as the nomination of the young prince would leave the regency in their hands, availed themselves, in addition to all the other persuasions they had at their command, of the powerful argument of national unanimity; they represented the great importance of conciliating popular feeling; the advantages of concentrating and thereby facilitating the collection of the revenues under a system to which the people yielded a willing submission; and they described in forcible terms the distractions and disunions that must follow the adoption of a principle which had been so long abandoned on account of its practical inconveniences. The influence of the nobility, supported as it was by the

general voice, prevailed; and the khan repudiated the pretensions of Yury; sanctioned the succession of Vassily the Blind; and, in order to mark his recognition of the principle the more distinctly, he released the grand prince from the payment of tribute to the horde, and decreed that the prince of Galitsch should hold the bridle of his nephew's horse on his entrance into the capital.

Thus defeated in his project, the ambitious Yury resolved to take by force what he could not obtain by pacific measures. He summoned his followers, and seizing upon an opportunity when such a design was least to be expected, he surprised Moscow, possessed himself of the throne, and sentenced Vassily to exile.

If such an act of violence had taken place fifty years previously, the lineal succession must have given way before the fury of civil war: but the people had become so accustomed to the regular birth and accession of their native princes, whose education for the important dignity, taking place under their own eyes, had taught them to look forward with habitual confidence to their future government, and the boyards were so bound to the maintenance of the established order by personal feelings and local interest, that the usurpation of Yury was overthrown at once by a grand movement of popular alienation. This is the first instance in the history of Russia of the moral influence of public opinion acting upon the institutions of the government: and it was so calm, so signal, and so rapid, that its effects were the more wonderful and complete. Not a sword was drawn, not a drop of blood was shed, to restore the legal rights of the deposed prince. The people felt their own strength; they knew that it was stronger than gold or arms; and that a determined and simultaneous expression of their will would vindicate the law in a spirit more consistent with its character than a rude appeal to physical force. This selection of the mode of resistance must be admitted as an extraordinary evidence of the improved civilisation of Russia. Instead

of resorting to the usage of battle, by which the strong arm must prevail without reference to the equity of the cause, they relied upon the force of justice,—upon that moral power which had hitherto exercised so small an authority in the decision of their civil feuds. There was no complaint to the horde, no levying of armies, no conspiracy, no tumult. The priests, the nobles, and the people, with one accord, disavowed the authority of the usurper. The whole population of the capital in a solemn procession followed Vassily into banishment. The streets of Moscow were depopulated. Yury was left alone to wield a barren sceptre. The terrors of this sudden insulation struck dismay to his heart. He looked around and found himself deserted; even his own son, vanquished by the universal judgment, had abandoned him: the solitude of a naked sovereignty turned his guilty ambition into cowardice; he fled from the lonely throne he had so unwisely coveted, and surrendered it to the legitimate heir. The restoration of Vassily was the work of a few days; so mighty was this unexampled revolution of opinion.

That this great movement in favour of legitimacy was the offspring of devotion to the principle it protected, and not to the prince, was abundantly proved in the subsequent events of this reign. Vassily the Blind was one of those wilful, imprudent, and obstinate rulers who cannot avail themselves of the wisdom of others, and who, without entirely confiding in their own judgment, are continually making compromises between expediency and caprice. His errors and blunders were so frequent and so glaring, that he was continually exposed to the distrust of the Russians and the Tartars. He could not satisfy either. He seemed to vacillate from choice, or in obedience to some infatuation that was always leading him into crooked paths of policy, and perverting and perplexing his views. If the follies or vices of the sovereign could have disgusted the people with the law that placed him on the throne, legitimate succession must have terminated in the career

of this misguided prince; but the law had taken deep root in the affection of the community, and was not to be confounded with the accident of individual abuse. Once, in the course of his troubled ascendency, Vassily was precipitated from the throne by the Tartars, and once by the son of Yury, who took advantage of the general sentiment that prevailed, and not content with the deposition of the grand prince, tore out the eyes of that unfortunate monarch; whose surname was thus doubly applicable to his nature, for there never was a sovereign to whom the epithet of Blind was more justly applied in its dual sense. The new usurpation was, however, as unpopular as the old. The nobles and the people deserted the intruder, and replaced Vassily on the throne. The son of Yury, obliged to fly, took refuge in Novgorod, where he was poisoned by his own people. The republic was compelled to pay a ransom for harbouring the traitor.

Legitimacy was triumphant under every circumstance. Even this unfavourable scion of the reigning stock was supported by the common voice. The republics of Novgorod, Viatka, and Pskof, that had maintained themselves against the paramount authority of the grand prince, were beginning to yield; and on the death of Vassily the Blind, the succession of Ivan III. was recognised as an indisputable right.

CHAP. XII.

DYNASTY OF THE MUSCOVITE PRINCES. — REIGN OF IVAN THE GREAT. — POLICY OF THE TARTARS IN REFERENCE TO THE GREEK CHURCH. — CRAFTY AND CAUTIOUS POLICY OF IVAN. — HE EVADES THE TRIBUTE, AND SEIZES UPON KASAN. — DISCONTENT OF THE RUSSIAN REPUBLICS. — REVOLT AND FINAL SUBJUGATION OF NOVGOROD. — THE TARTARS PREPARE FOR A THIRD INVASION. — COWARDICE OF IVAN. — TOTAL EXTINCTION OF THE TARTAR RULE. — RAPID PROGRESS TOWARDS AUTOCRACY. — INVASION OF LITHUANIA. — IVAN TAKES THE TITLE OF CZAR, AND FORMS AN ALLIANCE WITH GREECE. — HE DEGRADES THE BOYARDS. — A JEWISH HERESY GROWS UP IN THE CHURCH. — IMPROVED ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAWS. — DEATH AND CHARACTER OF IVAN.

THE dynasty of the Muscovite princes, which commenced in the person of Ivan Kalita, and was preserved unbroken in the lineal descent, was fortunately strengthened by the accident of the longevity of his successors. The reigns of Ivan, of Simeon the Proud, of Dmitry Donskoi, of Vassily, and of Vassily the Blind, embraced a period of 130 years. During that time the people had become habituated to a right which saved them from the contests of rival competitors. The great length of so many protracted reigns had stamped the legitimate authority with an unquestioned ascendency, and with this growth of time its powers inevitably increased. The manners of the Russians were now formed under a rule in which the succession was fixed and immutable, and under which a progressive system of legislation was gradually assuming a compact and tangible form. The chaos of antagonist principles, — of that misrule which is born of short-lived theories, of constant interruption, and unsettled governments,—was rapidly dissolving; the light of defined administration and regulated power was rising upon the empire; and the people, who were now be-

ginning to understand the benefits of constituted rights, were ready to support their maintenance.

Under these auspicious circumstances, Ivan III., or, as he is called by some historians, Ivan the Great, ascended the throne.

It was not to be expected that a liberal and enlightened government could at once spring from the materials which were accumulated in seasons of anarchy, relieved only by interstitial gleams of peace. The natural issue of a power purchased by enormous sacrifices, and reared up amidst difficulties, was unmitigated despotism. The grand princedom was erected in storms. Its power was built up by constant accessions won at the point of the sword, or procured by profligate bribery. It was not the growth of steady improvement, of public opinion, of the voluntary acquiescence of the people. It began by direct oppression, absolute tyranny, and open injustice. The acts of outrage which the grand princes committed in their efforts to sustain their authority were acts of necessity. They were placed in a situation of peril that exposed them equally to barbarian spoilers without, and insidious enemies within; and they were compelled to vindicate their authority by the force of arms and the arts of perfidy. Their whole career was a fluctuating war against a series of resistances. They conciliated less than they subdued, and the unity which was at last gained by perseverance in a mixed policy of violence and hypocrisy was more the bond of an interest in common, than the reasonable allegiance of a free people to a government of their own choice.

Throughout the struggle for the concentration of the supreme controul in one head the church, as will already have been perceived, bore a prominent part. The authority of the clergy had gone on gradually assuming a more stern and arbitrary aspect, even while the political affairs of the country were undergoing daily vicissitudes. The evils that afflicted the state passed harmless over the church; and while the one was subjected to disasters that checked its progress towards

prosperity, the other was constantly enlarging its powers, profiting by the misfortunes that surrounded it, and gleaning its share of the good fortune that occasionally improved the hopes of the people. In the early periods when Russia was merely the victim of her own dissensions, the church was freely admitted as a mediator, partly in virtue of her office as the dispenser of charity and peace, and partly from the veneration in which religion and its ordinances were held. When the Tartars invaded Russia, they perceived the mighty influence which the priests exercised over the passions of the people, and, fully persuaded of the wisdom of attaching to their cause an order of men who wielded so enormous a power, they increased their privileges, exonerated them from taxes, and placed such premiums of gain and protection upon the monkish habit, that the highest amongst the nobility, and many of the princes, embraced the clerical profession, and added their rich possessions to the revenues of the church. To such an extravagance was this estimation of the benefits of the cowl carried, that the majority of the grand princes took vows before their death, and died in the retired sanctuaries of the religious houses. The monks of the Greek religion, loaded with the spoils of friends and enemies, lived in fortified dwellings, like the nobles of other lands, and were defended by formidable retinues. The primate held a court superior in magnificence to that of the grand prince, and surrounded by boyards, guards, and all the luxuries of the east: he possessed almost unlimited power over life and death; he was the first person who was consulted on all questions of difficulty; and, as a means of exhibiting the supremacy of his station, he instituted public ceremonies, at which the princes assisted, holding the bridle of the ass on which he rode. This tendency of the church to outgrow the space wherein its roots were laid, was greatly forwarded by the fertilizing contributions which flowed in upon it from all quarters. Whenever a phenomenon in the physical world alarmed the superstitions of the people, the major part of the

population bequeathed their wealth to the monasteries, with the hope of propitiating the favour of Heaven and securing happiness in the next world. The corruptions of the church of Rome had already crept into the administration of the Greek faith. The system of donations that prevailed in Papal Italy, where even the kingdoms of earth were bartered for the kingdom of heaven, had set an example of which the Russian clergy were not slow to avail themselves. It was, perhaps, a natural conclusion that the clemency of the Godhead could be purchased in a country where earthly justice and exemptions from punishments were sold for pecuniary considerations.

But the lenity and favour shown by the Tartars to the Greek clergy did not produce the effect upon which they calculated. The Tartars, accustomed to rule people of different religions, and possessing within themselves no ecclesiastical foundations, for their wandering mode of life prevented their priesthood from resolving itself into a corporation, viewed with comparative indifference the spreading institutions and growing strength of the church. They only contemplated in the honours and advantages they heaped upon it, the policy of gaining over to their side a powerful body of auxiliaries. But the indestructible spirit of Christianity shrunk from an union with the creed of the Pagans; while the barbarous intolerance of the Tartars furnished a further motive to array the priests against the enemies of their religion and their country. They knew that in the grand princedom resided the sole power by which the Tartars were ultimately to be driven out of the land; they saw that to arm that power with sufficient means it was necessary to enrich its treasury, to enlarge its bounds, and to attract within the circle of its sway the allegiance of the whole of the Russian principalities; they perceived in the civil commotions that oppressed the empire a constant source of internal weakness, and they dedicated their energies and their influence to the one object of rendering the grand prince supreme.

Mahometanism assailed them on the one hand, and the Papal church on the other: they wanted a rallying point of resistance against both; and they could only find it in the elevation of the thrône to an imperial height. Hence, the clergy supported the principle of legitimacy, which by its consistency and perpetuity was calculated to promote the progressive ascension of the princely authority; and thus by degrees, and the inevitable progress of an active doctrine that survived through every obstacle, the church became blended with the state; and the policy of the priesthood, exercising its subtle influence, governed and directed the motions of the civil jurisdiction.

Ivan the Great, favoured by such auspicious dispositions on the part of the clergy, and by the rapid coherence of the principalities, ascended the throne in 1462, at the age of twenty-two. He was a man of great cunning and prudence, and was remarkable for indomitable perseverance, which carried him triumphantly to the conclusion of his designs in a spirit of utter indifference to the ruin or bad faith that tracked his progress. Such a man alone, who was prepared to sacrifice the scruples of honour and the demands of justice, was fit to meet the difficulties by which the grand princedom was surrounded. He saw them all clearly, resolved upon the course he should take; and throughout a long reign, in which the paramount ambition of rendering Russia independent and the throne supreme was the leading feature of his policy, he pursued his plans with undeviating consistency. But that policy was not to be accomplished by open and and responsible acts. The whole character of Ivan was tinged with the duplicity of the churchmen who held so high a place in his councils. His proceedings were neither direct, nor at first apparently conducive to the interests of the empire; but the great cause was secretly advancing against all impediments. While he forbore to risk his advantages, he left an opportunity for disunion amongst his enemies, by which he was certain to gain in

the end. He never committed himself to a position of the security of which he was not sure; and he carried this spirit of caution to such an extremity that many of the early years of his reign present a succession of timid and vacillating movements, that more nearly resemble the subterfuges of a coward than the crafty artifices of a despot.

The objects of which he never lost sight were, to free himself from enemies abroad, and to convert the princedom at home into an autocracy. So extensive a design could not have been effected by mere force of arms, for he had so many domestic and foreign foes to meet at once, and so many points of attack and defence to cover, that it was impossible to conduct so grand a project by military means alone. That which he could not effect, therefore, by the sword, he endeavoured to perform by diplomatic intrigue; and thus, between the occasional victories of his armies, and the still more powerful influence of his subtle policy, he reduced his foes, and raised himself to an eminence to which none of his most ambitious predecessors had aspired.

The powers against whom he had to wage this double war of arms and diplomacy were the Tartars and Lithuanians, beyond the frontier; and the independent republics of Novgorod, Viatka, and Pskof, and the princes of the yet unsettled appanages within. The means he had at his command were fully sufficient to have enabled him to subdue those princes of the blood who exhibited faint signs of discontent in their appanages, and who could have been easily reached through the widely diffused agency of the boyards; but the obstinate republics of the north were more difficult of access. They stood boldly upon their independence, and every attempt to reduce them was followed by as fierce a resistance, and by such a lavish outlay of the wealth which their commercial advantages had enabled them to amass, that the task was one of extraordinary difficulty. Kasan, the first and greatest of the Tartar cities, too, claimed a sovereignty over the republics, which Ivan

was afraid to contest, lest that which was but a vague and empty claim might end in confirmed authority. It was better to permit the insolent republicans to maintain their entire freedom, than to hazard by indiscretion their transference to the hands of those Tartars who were loosened from the parent stock.

His first act, therefore, was to acknowledge, directly or indirectly, according to the nature of their different tenures, the rights of all his foes within and without. He appeared to admit the justice of things as he found them; betrayed his foreign enemies into a confidential reliance upon his acquiescence in their exactions; and even yielded without a murmur to an abuse of those pretensions to which he affected to submit, but which he was secretly resolved to annihilate. This plausible conformity procured him time to prepare and mature his designs; and so insidiously did he pursue his purpose, that he extended that time by a servility which nearly forfeited the attachment of the people. The immediate object of consideration was obviously the golden horde, because all the princes and republics, and even the Poles and Lithuanians, were interested in any movement that was calculated to embarrass the common enemy. Ivan's policy was to unite as many of his enemies as he could against a single one, and finally to subdue them all by the aid of each other. Had he ventured upon any less certain course, he must have risked a similar combination against himself. He began by withholding the ordinary tribute from the khan, but without exhibiting any symptoms of inallegiance. He merely evaded the tax, while he acknowledged the right; and his dissimulation succeeded in blinding the Tartar, who still believed that he held the grand prince as a tributary, although he did not receive his tribute. The khan, completely deceived, not only permitted this recusancy to escape with impunity, but was farther prevailed upon to withdraw the Tartar residents, and their retinues, and the Tartar merchants, who dwelt in Moscow, and who infested

with the haughty bearing of masters even the avenues of the Kremlin. This latter concession was purchased by bribery, for Ivan condescended to buy the interference of a Tartar princess. So slavish and degrading was his outward seeming, that his wife, a noble and spirited lady, the daughter of the emperor of Byzantium, could with difficulty prevail upon him to forego the humiliating usages which had hitherto attended the reception of the Mongol envoys. It had been customary on the part of the grand princes to go forward to meet the Tartar minister, to spread a carpet of fur under his horse's feet, to hear the khan's letter read upon their knees, to present to the envoy a cup of koumiss, and to lick from the mane of the horse the drops which had fallen from the lips of the negotiator: and these disagreeable customs Ivan would have complied with, but for the successful remonstrances of the grand princess.

Kasan presented the most alluring point of actual attack. The horde that had established that city subsisted by predatory excursions, and even the other bands of the barbarians were not unwilling to witness the descent of the Russians upon one of their own tribes that had acquired so much power. The project was favoured by so many circumstances, that, although his policy was evidently at this period to preserve peace as long as he could, he was tempted to make a general levy, and to assemble the whole flower of the population for the purpose of driving out of his dominions the bold invaders who had intrenched themselves within the walls of a fortified town. This was about 1468. At that very time the army of the golden horde, inspired by some sudden impulse, were advancing into Russia.* It appears, however, that the multitudes assembled by Ivan were so numerous, that the khan's

* This was the second invasion of Russia by the Tartars within the space of a few years. The first, which took place in 1460, was defeated by the fortunate interference of the Tartars of the Crimea. It was the existence of these divisions amongst the Tartars which finally enabled Russia to crush that enormous power.

troops retired upon the mere rumour of their approach; so that the display of his resources had all the effect he desired, and he won a signal victory without striking a blow. The old Russian annalist dwells with some pomp of words upon this bloodless triumph, and, in the true vein of hyperbole, says that the Russian army shone like the waves of the sea illuminated by the sunbeams. We take the expression for all it is worth, when we estimate the force as having been more numerous than that of the Tartars. It does not appear that Ivan was yet prepared, even with this great armament, to risk his future objects by any hostile collision, so long as such an extremity could be averted by intrigue; for in the following year, when the anticipated march against Kasan was at last commenced, he suddenly paused in the midst of his course, although the result was almost certain. Were it of much consequence, it would not be easy to decide the cause of this strange and abrupt proceeding; but it was evident that the soldiery were resolved not to return home without spoils. They rushed onwards to the city; and even the general, who was instructed by Ivan to countermand the attack, in vain attempted to restrain them. With a leader of their own choosing, they fell upon Kasan, and utterly routed the inhabitants. The grand prince, perceiving that the enemy was powerless, now no longer hesitated; but, engaging all the princes in his service, and throwing his own guards into the ranks, he despatched his colossal forces to reduce the already dismembered hold of the Tartars of Kasan. The event was a complete victory; but Ivan remained safe at Moscow, to watch the issue of an undertaking which he could not reasonably have feared.

The subjugation of Kasan left the field clear for his designs upon the three domestic republics. Viatka, insolent in its own strength, declared itself neutral between Moscow and Kasan; and on the fall of the latter city, Novgorod, apprehensive that Ivan would turn his arms immediately against her, called upon the people of

Pskof for aid, expressing her determination to march at once against the grand prince, in order to anticipate and avert his intentions. The Novgorodians were the more determined upon this bold measure by the personal pusillanimity which Ivan betrayed in a war where the advantages lay entirely at his own side. They calculated upon the terror they should inspire; and judged that if they could not succeed in vanquishing the grand prince, they should, at all events, be enabled to secure their own terms. Marpha, a rich and influential woman, the widow of a Posadnick, and who was enamoured of a Lithuanian chief, conceiving the romantic design of bestowing her country as a marriage dower upon her lover, exerted all her power to kindle the enthusiasm and assist the project of the citizens. Her hospitality was unbounded; she threw open her palace to the people; lavished her wealth amongst them in sumptuous entertainments and exhibitions, and caused the vetchooi-kolokol, or assembling bell, which summoned the popular meetings to the market-place, to be rung as the signal of these orgies of licentiousness. The great bell in Novgorod was the type of the republican independence of the citizens, and represented the excesses into which they were not unwilling to plunge, whenever it was necessary to testify their sense of that wild liberty which they had established amongst themselves. It was tolled on all occasions of a public nature, and the people gathered in multitudes at the well-known call. If any individual were accused of a crime against the republic, or of any offence against the laws, the judges appeared at the sound of the bell to hold a summary court of justice, and the citizens surrounded the trial-seat prepared to execute the sentence. Every citizen, with his sons, attended, carrying each two stones under his arms; and, if the accused were found guilty, lapidation instantly followed. The house of the culprit was also immediately plundered, cast down, confiscated, and sold for the benefit of the corporation. Except in China, where a law still more sanguinary and destructive prevails in cases of murder, there is hardly

a similar instance of deliberate legal severity to be found amongst nations elevated above barbarism.

Inspired by the revelries of the ambitious Marpha, and the patriotic associations she awakened, the Novgorodians expelled the officer of the grand prince; possessed themselves of some lands that belonged to him in right of his fief; and, to confirm their revolt against his authority, submitted themselves, by treaty, to Casimir prince of Lithuania.

In this position of affairs, Ivan wisely resolved to leave Viatka to its own course, confining his attention solely to Novgorod, and seeking to win over Pskof and its twelve tributary cities, so that he might combine them against the turbulent republic. The fall of Novgorod accomplished, the conquest of the other obstinate cities, was easily effected.

The politic, cool, and persevering means he brought into operation against the refractory republic, were admirably seconded by the machinery of communication which had been previously established in the persons of the boyards, whose local influence was of the first consequence on this occasion. As the tide of these numerous negotiations changed, Ivan assumed the humility or the pride, the generosity or the severity, adapted to the immediate purpose; and, working upon the characters of the individuals as well as their interests, he succeeded in gaining a great moral lever before he unsheathed a sword. He made allies of all the classes and princes that lay in his way to the heart of the independent corporation. He represented to the nobles the anomalous nature and usurpation of the democratic institutions of Novgorod, and he roused their pride into resentment. He gained over the few princes who still held trembling appanages by painting to them in strong colours the enormous opulence and commercial monopolies of the republic; and he filled the whole population with revenge against the fated city, by exaggerated accounts of its treasonable designs against the internal security of the empire. Thus by artful insinuations of the personal

advantages and general benefits that were to spring from the overthrow of Novgorod, he succeeded in neutralising all the opposition he had any reason to apprehend, and in exciting increased enthusiasm on the part of the people. Having made these subtle preparations to facilitate his proceedings, he sent an ambassador to the citizens calling upon them to acknowledge his authority; and only awaited their decisive refusal, which he anticipated, as an excuse for immediate hostilities. The Novgorodians returned an answer couched in terms of scorn and defiance. His reply was carried by three formidable armies, which, breaking in on the Novgorodian territory on three different sides, prostrated the hopes of the citizens by overwhelming masses, against which their gallant resistance was of no avail. In this brief and desperate struggle, Ivan possessed extraordinary superiority by the recent acquisition of fire-arms and cannon, the use of which he had learned from Aristotle of Bologna, an Italian, whom he had taken into his service as an architect, mint-master, and founder. The triumph of the arms of the grand prince was rapidly followed by the incursions of swarms of the peasantry, who, secretly urged forward by Ivan, rushed upon the routed enemy, and completed the work of devastation. This licentious exhibition of popular feeling Ivan affected to repress, and, availing himself of the opportunity it afforded to assume towards the Novgorodians a moderation he did not feel, he pretended to protect them against any greater violence than was merely necessary to establish his right to the recovery of the domains of which they had despoiled him, and the payment of the ransom that was customary under such circumstances. Here his deep and crafty genius had room for appropriate display. He did not consider it prudent to seize upon the republic at once, as, in that event, he was bound to partition it amongst his kinsmen, by whose aid, extended upon special promises, he had overthrown it: so he contented himself with a rich ransom, having already beggared it by suffering his lawless followers to plunder it uninteruptedly before he

interfered, and by demanding an act of submission. But in this act he contrived to insert some words of ambiguous tendency, under the shelter of which he might, when his own time arrived, leap upon his prey with impunity.

The confusion into which the Novgorodians were thrown, and the great reduction of strength which they suffered in the contest, enabled Ivan to deprive them of some of their tributaries, under the pretence of rendering them a service, so that their exhaustion was seized upon as a fresh source of injustice. The Permians having offered some indignity to the republic, Ivan interfered, and transferred the commerce of that people with Germany to Moscow; and, on another occasion, when the Livonian knights attempted an aggression, Ivan sent his ambassadors and troops to force a negotiation in his own name; thus actually depriving both Novgorod and Pskof, they being mutually concerned, of the right of making peace and war in their own behalf.

By insidious measures like these he continued to oppress and absorb the once independent city that claimed and kept so towering an ascendency. But not satisfied with such means of accumulating the supreme power, he sowed dissensions between the rich classes and the poor; and after fomenting fictitious grievances, terminating in open quarrel, he succeeded in having all complaints laid before him for decision. Then going amongst them, he impoverished the wealthy by the lavish presents his visits demanded, and captivated the imagination of the multitude by the dazzling splendour of his retinues, and the flexible quality of his justice. The time was now approaching for a more explicit declaration of his views. On pretence of these disagreements he loaded some of the principal citizens, the oligarchs of the republic, with chains, and sent them to Moscow. It was so arranged that these nobles were denounced by the mob; and Ivan, in acceding to their demand for vengeance, secured the allegiance of the great bulk of the population. The stratagem succeeded;

and with each new violation of justice he gained an accession of popular favour.

The progress of the scheme against the liberties of Novgorod was slow, but inevitable. The inhabitants gradually referred all their disputes to the grand prince; and he, profiting by the growing desire to erect him into the sole judge of their domestic grievances, at length summoned the citizens to appear before him at Moscow. The demand was as unexpected as it was extraordinary. Never before had the Novgorodians gone out from their own walls to sue or receive judgment; but so seductive and treacherous were the professions of Ivan that, unsuspicious of his designs, they consented to appear before his throne. Throughout the whole of these encroachments on the ancient usages in which the rights of the people resided, he appeared to be lifted above all personal or tyrannical views. Marpha, the ambitious widow, who had stirred up the revolt and sought to attach Novgorod to Lithuania, had never been molested; and even the principal persons who were most conspicuous in resisting his authority at the outset were suffered to remain unharmed. These instances of magnanimity, as they were believed to be, lulled the distrust of the citizens, and seduced them by degrees to abandon their old customs one by one at his bidding. For seven years he continued with unwearied perseverance to wean them from all those distinctive habits that marked their original character, and separated them from the rest of the empire; and at last, when he thought that he had succeeded in obliterating their attachment to the republican form of government, he advanced his claim to the absolute sovereignty, which was now sanctioned by numberless acts of submission, and by traitorous voices of assent within the council of the citizens.

At an audience to which he admitted an envoy of the republic, that officer, either wilfully or by accident, addressed him by the name of sovereign; and Ivan, instantly seizing upon the inadvertency, claimed all the

privileges of an absolute master. He required that the republic should surrender its expiring rights into his hands, and take a solemn oath of allegiance; that his boyards should be received within their gates, with full authority to exercise their almost irresponsible control over the city; that the palace of Yaroslaf, the temple of Novgorodian liberty, should be given up to his viceroy; that the forum should be abolished; and that the popular assemblies, and all the corresponding immunities of the people, should be abrogated for ever.

The veil was dropped too suddenly. The citizens were not prepared for so abrupt and uncompromising an assertion of authority. Hitherto they had admitted the innovations of the grand prince, but it was of their own free will. They did not expect that he would ground any right of sovereignty upon their voluntary acquiescence in his character of arbitrator and ally; and the news of his despotic claim filled them with despair and indignation. The great bell, which had formerly been the emblem of their citizenship, now tolled for the last time. They assembled in the market-place in tumultuous crowds, and summoning the treacherous or imprudent envoy before them, they tried him by a clamorous and summary process, and before the sentence was completed, tore him limb from limb. Believing that some of the nobles were accessory to the surrender of their freedom, they fell upon those they suspected, and murdered them in the streets, thus hastening and confirming by their intemperance the final alienation of the wealthy classes from their cause; and having by these acts of unbridled desperation given the last demonstrations of their independence, they once more threw themselves into the arms of Lithuania, which were open to receive them.

But Ivan was prepared for this demonstration of passion. His measures were too deeply taken to suffer surprise by any course which the Novgorodians, in their righteous hatred of oppression, might think fit to adopt. When he learned the reception they gave to his man-

date, he affected the most painful astonishment. He declared that he alone was the party aggrieved, that he alone was deceived; that they had sought him to become their sovereign; that they had laid snares for his counsel and countenance; and that even when, yielding to their universal requisition, he had consented to take upon him the toils of government, they had the audacity to confront him with an imposition in the face of Russia, to shed the blood of their fellow men, and to insult Heaven and the empire by calling into the sacred limits the soldiers of an adverse religion and a foreign power. These ingenious remonstrances were addressed to the priests, the nobles, and the people, and had the desired effect. The bishops embarked zealously in the crusade, and the people entered willingly into the delusion. The dependent republic of Pskof, and the principality of Twer, paralysed in the convulsion, appeared to waver; but Ivan, resolved to deprive Novgorod of any help they might ultimately be tempted to offer, drew out their military strength under the form of a contingency, and left them powerless. Yet, although strongly reinforced on all sides, he still avoided a contest. With a mingled exhibition of revenge and attachment, he threatened and propitiated in the same breath. "I will reign supreme at Novgorod," he exclaimed; "as I do at Moscow. You must surrender all to me, your Posadnick, and the bell that calls your national council together:" and, at the same time, he professed his determination to respect those very liberties which, by these demands, were to be sacrificed for ever. The Novgorodians, terrified by the immense force Ivan had collected, which it seemed he only used to menace, and not to destroy, attempted to capitulate; but he was insensible to all their representations, and even while he promised them their freedom, he refused to grant it. The armament, mighty as it was, which he had prepared, was kept aloof to threaten, and not to strike. He acted as if he feared to risk the issue of a contest with any of his enemies, or as if he were unwilling to suffer the loss

consequent even upon victory. He wanted to overbear by terror rather than by arms, so that the fearful agency of his name might do the work of conquest more powerfully and at less cost than his armies, which must have been thinned by battles, and might have been subdued by fortune. So long as he could preserve his terrible ascendency by the force of the fear which he inspired, he was secure; but a single defeat, or the doubtful issue of a solitary struggle, might reduce the potent charm of his unvanquished power. In this way he drew the chain tighter and tighter; and in the agonies of the protracted and narrowing pressure, Novgorod, unable to resist, died in the agonies of despair.

The surrender of the liberties of the republic was complete. On taking possession of the city, Ivan seized upon the person of the popular Marpha, and sent her and seven of the principal citizens as prisoners to Moscow, confiscating their properties in the name of the state. The national assemblies and municipal privileges ceased on the 15th of January, 1478, on which day the people took the oath of servitude; and on the 18th, the boyards and their immediate followers, and the wealthy and influential classes of the inhabitants, voluntarily came forward and entered into the service of the grand prince. The revenues of the clergy, which were by the act of submission transferred to the treasury of Ivan, were immediately devoted by him to the service of three hundred thousand followers of boyards, through whose intermediate agency he intended to assert and maintain his unlimited and supreme authority over the fallen city. But not alone did he possess himself of the private property of some of the principal persons who had rendered themselves prominent in the recent declaration of independence, but he demanded a surrender of a great part of the territories that belonged by charter to the public. He also further enriched himself, and impoverished the Novgorodians, by seizing upon all the gold and valuables to which he could, with any show of propriety, lay claim. He is said to have conveyed to Moscow no less than

three hundred cart-loads of gold, silver, and precious stones, besides furs, cloths, and merchandise to a considerable amount. *

The settlement of his power in Novgorod had scarcely been concluded, when intelligence was received that the Tartars of the Golden Horde were preparing for a third invasion. The enormous physical force that was at Ivan's disposal, the late accession of strength and increase of domain, by which his means were not only improved, but the number and means of his opponents were reduced, and the general state of the country, which was, in all respects, favourable to the objects of his ambition, deprived such a movement of its wonted terrors. Ivan had nothing to fear from the approach of the enemy. He was surrounded by the princes of the blood, who had warmly embarked in the common cause: he had an immense army at his command, panting for new fields of spoil and glory: he had broken up his domestic enemies in the north, and dismembered or attached the insurgent republics: he had left Lithuania to the rapacious guardianship of the khan of the Crimea, who was sufficiently formidable to neutralise the incursions of the duchy upon the frontier; and on every side he found an ardent population impatient to expel the invader. Yet, encouraging as these circumstances were, and although they seemed to present the fortunate opportunity for carrying into execution his cherished plan of autocracy, Ivan held back. He alone of all Russia was intimidated. His project of empire was so lofty and comprehensive, that he appeared to shrink from any

* Amongst other acts of oppression committed by Ivan at this period, was the imprisonment of all the German merchants resident in Novgorod, to the number of forty-nine. He also confiscated all the merchandise belonging to the Hanseatic league. The merchants he afterwards liberated, but he never restored their property. The poor Germans terminated their misfortunes in the Baltic, where the majority of them were drowned on their voyage home. The excuse offered by Ivan for this tyrannous act was some petty insult that had been levelled at him by a Hanseatic city, but his breach of integrity to the merchants produced all the consequences he could have desired. It destroyed the confidence of all those nations that had hitherto traded so largely to Novgorod. The commerce of the North took other channels, and the mighty Novgorod was reduced to the lowest state of anarchy and destitution.

collision that could even remotely peril its ultimate success. He was so dismayed that he forced the princess to fly from Moscow, and seek a temporary shelter in the north. Terror-struck and unmanned, he deserted the army, and shut himself up in the capital for security; and when the armed population, pouring forth from all quarters, and animated by one spirit of resistance, had advanced as far as the Oka to meet the Tartars, he recalled his son to the capital, as if he apprehended the consummation of some evil, either in his own person or that of his heir. But the voice of the general indignation reached him in his retreat, and even his son refused to leave his post at the army. The murmurs of a disappointed people rose into clamours which he could not affect to misunderstand. They reproached him with having burthened them with taxes without having paid the khan his tribute; and that, now the Tartars had come into Russia to demand restitution, he fled from the vindication of his own acts, and left the people to extricate themselves from a dilemma into which he had brought them. In this difficulty Ivan had no choice left, but to submit to the will of the country. He accordingly convoked a meeting of the bishops and boyards for the purpose of asking their advice; but their counsel was even still more conclusive; and the reluctant prince was compelled to rejoin the army. The fear by which he was moved, however, could not be concealed, and it gradually infected the ranks of the soldiery. He had no sooner taken his station at the head of the army than he became spell-bound. A river, the Lugra, divided him from the enemy: he could not summon courage to attempt it, but stood gazing in disastrous terror upon the foe, with whom he opened negotiations to beg for terms. In the mean time the news of his indecision spread, and the people at Moscow grew turbulent. The primate, perceiving the disaffection that was springing up, addressed the prince in the language of despair. He represented to him the state of the public mind, and the inglorious procedure of suing for a peace where he could

ensure a victory, and dictate his own terms. "Would you," exclaimed the primate, "give up Russia to fire and sword, and the churches to plunder? Whither would you fly? Can you soar upward like the eagle? Can you make your nest amidst the stars? The Lord will cast you down from even that asylum. No! you will not desert us. You would blush at the name of fugitive and traitor to your country!"

Ivan was surrounded by 200,000 soldiers; reinforcements were thronging constantly to his side; the enemy was cut off from all assistance from his ally of Lithuania; and one word of encouragement would have set all these advantages into action. The troops only awaited the signal to rush upon the invaders: but Ivan amidst these flattering and animating circumstances was dispirited. Even the voice of the church addressed him in vain. He was utterly paralysed; and cowardice had so completely taken possession of his mind, that when the early winter had set in and frozen the river, so as to obliterate the obstacle that separated him from the troops of the khan, he was seized with consternation, and fled in the wildest disorder from his position. He was so alarmed that he could not even preserve any regularity on the retreat, and all was confusion and panic.

So disgraceful an abandonment of his duty, which in other times must have cost him his throne, if not his life, was not visited with that rigour by the Russians which so glaring a defection deserved. The sovereign prince was removed to too great a distance from the people to be judged of with precision or promptitude. The motives of his acts were not accessible to the multitude, who, accustomed to despotism, had not yet learned to question the wisdom of their rulers. The rapid advances that had been made towards the concentration of the governing power in the autocratical form, limited still more the means of popular observation, and the vigour of the popular check upon the supreme authority. The grand prince stood so much aloof from his sub-

jects, surrounded by special advisers and court favourites, that even the language of remonstrance, which sometimes reached his ears, was so softened in its progress that its harshness was that of subservient admonition; and he was as little shaken by the smothered discontent of the people, as they were roused by an open sacrifice of their interests. But not alone was this reverence for the autocracy so great as to protect the autocrat from violent reprisals on the part of his subjects; but the national veneration for the descendant of St. Vladimir and the stock of Rurik, was sufficient to absorb all the indignation which the weakness or the wickedness of the prince might have aroused.*

Ivan, however, independently of those accidents of prejudice and ignorance which preserved him from the wrath which he had so wantonly provoked, was destined to find all the unfavourable circumstances of his position changed into the most extraordinary and unexpected advantages. In the crisis of his despair, the fortunes of the day turned in his favour. While he hung behind the Lugra, seeking a base and humiliating compromise at the hands of the enemy, his lieutenant of Svenigorod, and his ally the khan of the Crimea, advanced upon the Golden Horde, and pushed their victorious arms into the very den of the Tartars, at the time that the Tartar forces were drawn off in the invasion of Russia. Speedy intelligence of this disaster having reached the enemy, he made a precipitate retreat, in the hope of reaching his fastnesses on the frontier in time to avert the destruction that threatened him: but the Russians had been too rapid in their movements; and the work of devastation, begun by them, was completed by a band of marauding Tartars, who entered soon after they retired, and, carrying away the women and the remnant of the treasures left behind, reduced the Golden Horde to ashes before the distant army could accomplish their retrograde march. Nor was this all the triumph that Ivan was called upon to share,

* Segur.

without any participation in the danger. The return of the Tartars was arrested midway by a hetman of the Cossacks and the murza of the Nogays, who, falling upon the confused and disorderly ranks, on their ill-conducted flight homewards, cut them in pieces, and left scarcely a living vestige on the field of the ancient and implacable enemies of the country.

The extinction of the Tartars was final. The Golden Horde was annihilated, and the scourge of Russia and her princes was no more. In a better educated state of society, these events, so sudden and so important, must have been attributed to proximate and obvious causes —the combination of operations over which Ivan had no control, and the dismay into which the Tartars were surprised, followed up quickly by overwhelming masses, who possessed the superiority in numbers and in plan. Ivan, who could not lay any claim to the honours of the enterprise, would not have been associated in its results, had the people been instructed in the respect which was due to themselves. But the Russians, profoundly venerating the person of the grand prince, and accustomed to consider him as the depositary of a wisdom refined above the sphere of ordinary mortality, did not hesitate to ascribe this transcendent exploit to the genius of the reluctant autocrat. They looked back upon his pusillanimity with awe, and extracted from his apparent fears the subtle elements of a second providence. He was no longer the coward and the waverer. He had seen the body of the future, before its extreme shadows had darkened other men's vision; and the whole course of his timid bearing, even including his flight from the Lugra, was interpreted into a prudent and prophetic policy, wonderful in its progress, and sublime in its consequences. Without risking a life, or spilling a drop of blood, and merely by an evasive diversion of his means, he had vanquished the Asiatic spoiler; and at the very moment that the people were disposed to doubt his skill and his courage, he had actually destroyed the giant by turning

the arms of his own nation against him. Such was the unanimous feeling of Russia. Transferring the glory of their signal deliverance from those who had achieved it to him who had evaded the responsibility of the attempt, they worshipped, in the grand prince, the incarnation of the new-born liberty.

Such fortuitous and unexpected advantages were not lost upon Ivan. He saw that the people were predisposed to give him credit for a foresight and a skill which he did not possess, and to receive with implicit confidence as the work of his genius whatever accidental benefits might arise to the empire. His real character was either misunderstood or entirely unknown; but so long as he could secure, by any means, the allegiance that was necessary to the fulfilment of his purposes, he did not care to inquire through what channel of ignorance or superstition it was made manifest. The overthrow of the Tartars was the most important object in the whole circle of his designs. The rapidity with which that object had been achieved inspired him with renewed ambition, and, by the removal of the most formidable of his adversaries, reduced the difficulties against which he had to contend on his way to the imperial power. The remaining republics soon shared the fate of Novgorod. With the same spirit of deception and precaution by which he had worn out the patience and exhausted the resources of Novgorod, he lulled and destroyed Viatka. He permitted it to rebel, tempted it onwards to acts of insubordination, and, with the first excuse that offered, burst upon it with overwhelming force, and annihilated its institutions. He put three persons to death by way of satisfying offended justice as mildly as possible, and left the rest of the inhabitants powerless.

Novgorod, however, still struggled at intervals, in the convulsions of death. Liberty was not to be extinguished by one deed of oppression: the historical recollections of the citizens still kept alive some sparks of the ancient fire amongst them; and occasionally some spirit, more

indignant and less prudent than the others, would break forth into loud and bitter reproaches against the sovereign authority. To repress and destroy this revolutionary tendency by degrees — for it could not be destroyed at once except by an act of depopulation — Ivan transplanted, from time to time, the principal Novgorodian families to different parts of the empire, and continued this mode of exhausting the city of its original inhabitants, until at last republican Novgorod was completely filled by vassals of his own. The walls still stood, and the temple of liberty was still in existence, but the people that crowded the streets were slaves.*

This violence seems, however, to have been necessary to the concentration of the strength of the empire. It is impossible that a country can change at once from barbarism to freedom, from strife and anarchy to a settled form of government, without passing through some ordeal of purification. The transition even to perfect liberty would be so sudden, that it would only be the substitution of one species of confusion for another. The medium of savage power in a despotic shape is, perhaps, the necessary preparation for an extensive alteration in the whole social body. It was indispensable to the future concentration of the domestic energies of Russia, that all its petty tyrants should fall before the supreme tyrant; that the small and inferior lordships, exercising irresponsible sway within their own domains, should give way to the single head of the state, in whom all other authority was destined to merge; and that every form of local administration that interfered with the universality of the paramount government, should be abolished and give place to the delegated authority from

* Although this city has for some centuries been reduced to insignificance, some of its most interesting features yet survive. A part of the house of the celebrated Martha is still shown to travellers; and the relics of numerous saints, with the traditions attached to them, are still preserved. In the dome of the cathedral of St. Sophia there is a picture of the Saviour, which, says the legend, was originally painted with the hand held up and expanded, in the act of blessing the people; but, on the following day, the hand was discovered to be closed, in which position it has ever since remained. The bulk of the people seem to have advanced very little beyond their state of ignorance at the time the picture was painted.

the capital. In the accomplishment of these magnificent plans, which embraced so wide a sphere of action, and included such a multiciplicity of interests, many acts of injustice and cruelty were unavoidable. If the wrongs of particular measures were to be examined in relation to the general advantage, there might be found some justification for the unsparing severities of Ivan; and it must be admitted that, unless he had broken all the ties of honour and humanity, and sacrificed all the best feelings of his nature, he could not have subdued the insurgent population so effectually as to have bound up the whole in one sentiment of a national interest in common. As the agent of an extraordinary change,— of the completion of a grand movement destined to affect the political condition of the entire of Europe, and to penetrate with its influence far into the east,—Ivan occupies a distinguished place in history. But if we separate the man from the monarch, and judge of him merely by the moral rectitude of his life, it will be difficult to discover a single point of character upon which we can accord to him a single expression of applause.

When he had completely prostrated the republics, there remained only those princes possessed of appanages, who still held out against the grand princedom, to be subdued. The autocracy on the one hand, and the surviving remnant of the feudal power on the other, occupied the ground of contest which had been so lately crowded by struggles of a more complicated and dangerous character. They could not long remain in a state of antagonist quiescence. They both felt that a collision must ensue, and they both speedily sought to bring it to a conclusion. Throughout the difficult period when, divided between intrigue and war, he had to resist the growing power of the republics, and to repel the advances of the Tartars, Ivan observed a cautious and circumspect bearing towards the feudal princes. For a series of years he affected to recognise their rights, never venturing to demonstrate the real sentiments by which he was inspired, except by declining to give them that

share of his conquests to which they considered themselves entitled, and by appropriating to himself the inheritance of two of his brothers who happened to die without heirs. He concealed his ultimate designs so effectually, that in 1480, when two of his brothers revolted, and, flying from Moscow, went into Lithuania to carve a fortune for themselves, he humbly supplicated them to return, and prevailed upon them to forego their resentments by the most ardent protestations, which he never intended to fulfil. Now, however, that the Golden Horde was subdued, and the republics amalgamated with the rest of the empire, the motive for this hypocrisy was at an end. Abandoning, therefore, his wary and wily politics, he drew the sword at once, beginning his aggressions upon the prince of Twer, one of the most formidable of his rivals. A family connection with that princedom had hitherto slightly checked the course of his proceedings, but the death of the connecting link dissolved the interest that subsisted between them, and left no further pretext for hesitation. The principality of Twer lay in the midst of his possessions and conquests. It was besieged by his arms in all directions, and he had only to press the chain more rigidly to ensure its conquest. He began by a show of injustice and undue demands; by threats and lures; and when he had succeeded in goading it to the last resource of seeking aid from the already impotent Lithuania, he charged it with treason, excited the population to rise against it, and, when the inhabitants were terror-struck by the array that surrounded them on all sides, he demanded, as the price of forgiveness, a levy that enfeebled the whole territory. Thus, without seeming to destroy, he drained the life-blood of the victim. But, not satisfied with that cruellest species of warfare which takes the disguise of mercy, he fomented quarrels between the Twerians and the Muscovites, until the former, wearied of a life of endless misery and insecurity, placed themselves for protection under the walls of Moscow, willing to purchase peace and safety at the price of independence. The

prince of Twer, seeing that all was lost, fled into Lithuania, and died an exile.

This decisive stroke acted as a warning to the remaining princes. They knew that the junction of Twer and Moscow rendered the power of the autocrat unapproachable; and Ivan, as if the period for unrestricted despotism had at last arrived, no longer condescended to employ with his enemies the arts of diplomacy, but spoke to them in a voice of thunder. The terror his accumulated conquests and the extraordinary good fortune that had attended his councils inspired, sufficed to procure the immediate submission of the sovereigns of Rostof and Yaroslaf. They accepted their principalities upon sufferance, and were glad to be permitted to govern in the name, and under the will, of Ivan, in those territories where they had hitherto been supreme. One prince fled from Russia in fear, and the autocrat compelled his father to disinherit him, appropriating the dismembered cities to himself. In the midst of this general dismay, two brothers of the despot still survived. One of them, in utter despair, submitted, and his appanage was at once united to that of the grand princedom; the other, unsuspicious of the treachery that awaited him, lingered at court full of generous and confiding thoughts; but Ivan caused him to be seized and placed in irons, under the ignominy of which he expired. Ivan is said to have wept over this deed, but the bishops soon stilled the voice of conscience, by granting him a plenary absolution.

All opposition to the autocracy was now at an end; the feudal resistance was overthrown, and Ivan sat without a rival throughout his vast dominions on the imperial throne of united Russia. The princes who, at his accession, either contested the palm of sovereignty with him, or resisted his encroachments with a force nearly equal to his own, were now either dead or banished, or so subjugated that they were the mere creatures of his will. They considered themselves fortunate to be permitted to mix with the higher classes of the

nobility, aspiring to no loftier station in the state; and not daring to refer, even by any silent show of pride, to the origin which they claimed in common with Ivan himself.

The whole of Russia was now subdued and united. The independent republics were destroyed; the princes of the resisting appanages overthrown; and the mighty enemy who had so long hung upon the frontiers, wasting the internal strength, and pressing down the energies of the empire, was at last struck to the earth. The accomplishment of this extraordinary succession of prosperous achievements was the work of a combination of preconcerted movements and accidental turns of fortune; but Ivan got the credit of the entire. He was the saviour of Russia; the extirpator of the foreign foe; the author of domestic unity, of the imperial power, and of the national liberty. Yet one opponent still remained in the field, whose attacks, although less open than those of the Tartar, were not unworthy of serious attention.

Casimir, duke of Poland, had for several years persisted in a mode of indirect warfare which served to harass the Russians in many ways. His allies or abettors in these schemes were chiefly the Livonian knights, and the Tartars of the Golden Horde; but he was adroit enough to attach to him such of the petty princes of Russia as from time to time were loosened in their allegiance from the Muscovite rule. Working with these materials, Casimir successfully undermined the attachment of the people of those provinces that appeared to be disposed to rebel, and, without seeming to assist them, he urged them secretly into direct acts of revolution and separation. By such means as these he assailed the power of Ivan; and, at the smallest expense of blood or treasure, kept the Russian monarch in a constant state of incertitude.

But Ivan was not destitute of allies who were strong enough and interested enough to resist the deceitful encroachments of the Pole. Stephen, the first hospodar

of Moldavia, connected with him by marriage, Matthias Corvinus king of Hungary, Maximilian of Austria, and, as occasion served, the khan of the Crimea, over whom, faithless as that ruler was, he exercised an extraordinary influence, were Ivan's associates in the war of artifices against Casimir. The duke of Poland was met by a spirit of intrigue as subtle as his own; and, but that his death terminated the unworthy contest, it is probable that Ivan must have finally inspired the whole of Poland with one sentiment of disaffection, without appearing even remotely to interfere.

The death of Casimir, however, broke up the system of kidnapping and bribery; and, by producing a division in the kingdom, contributed, with the rest of his good fortune, to accelerate the objects of the victorious Ivan. So long as Poland was united under one head, it is likely that Ivan would have pursued his usual course of affected reserve and apparent indifference; but now that the duchy of Lithuania was divorced from the parent state, and separately organised under prince Alexander, while the rest of the Polish territories were re-formed into a distinct government, Ivan saw no further reason to hesitate, but advanced at once to the execution of the design he had long cherished, and which this seemed to be the auspicious moment to carry into effect. The diffusion of power in the Polish territories under separate authorities, happening at the very time that the power of Russia was rapidly concentrating into an autocracy, gave him of course a still stronger motive, and a better assurance of success.

At the head of an immense army he marched towards Lithuania. He seemed to rely upon the number and reputation of his troops, rather than upon their performances in battle. He desired to subdue his foe without drawing a sword; to terrify him by the display of his superiority; and, by forcing him to beg for terms, to make him, as it were, the instrument of his own destruction. While he moved forward, the khan of the Crimea was employed in making a diversion in another

quarter, while the hospodar of Moldavia was committing an aggression in a different direction; so that the unfortunate Alexander of Lithuania, deserted by his brothers, and panic-struck by the new adversaries that thus rose up suddenly against him, was ready to make any concessions to save his unhappy subjects from the combined wrath of these powerful invaders. This was precisely what Ivan desired. He did not wish to peril himself in a battle, although the chances were so numerous in his favour: he wished to win by terror, to destroy by the breath of his word, and to raise up an empire by such means as would preserve its enormous population unscathed. The result of his advance into Lithuania was the arrangement of a marriage between Alexander, a prince who had some time before endeavoured to compass his death by poison, and the princess his daughter. This union, ostensibly intended to cement the two countries, and to procure a better understanding of their mutual interests, was in reality nothing more than a deep plot of Ivan's to ensnare the unsuspecting confidence of the Lithuanian prince, and ultimately to root out catholicity from his duchy. The Russian princess, a zealous member of the Greek church, was commissioned to carry the seeds of discord into her husband's states; and, by seeking all occasions to introduce her own faith, to foment a sort of religious war between the prince, the people, and the Russians. The plan had the desired effect. Alexander was a rigid catholic, and impatient of sectarian controversy: the consequence was, that he made a violent effort to defeat the designs of his wife; and thus giving an excuse to Ivan to wage war upon him in the name of Heaven, led that ambitious monarch in good earnest into the field, where, by one decisive victory, he recovered, as far as Kief and Smolensk, those possessions which, in former times, had been wrested from his ancestors by Vitovt and Guedimen.

The earthly mission of Ivan seemed now to be fulfilled. He had conquered all obstacles, and spread

around him one universal feeling of awe and submission; it was time, therefore, that he should adopt some distinguishing title by which he should stand alone and apart from all surrounding authorities, and by which he should be admitted into the family of European states, from which barbarous usages and civil strife had hitherto excluded Russia. He accordingly adopted a designation, introduced by him for the first time into Russia, but which, from its former use, was well calculated to convey the height of the authority to which he aspired, —this was the title of czar, which was originally found in the Slavonian translation of the Bible, and was from thence taken by the emperors of the East, and the khan of the Tartars. In the Persian language the word signifies supreme authority, and was aptly chosen as the style of the autocrat.*

On looking back at the progress of Ivan's career towards this unexampled elevation, while we discover much that is referable to that combination of favourable accidents which usually occurs to those who least stand in need of extraneous help, we also find much that was produced by a calm and persevering spirit, which was incessantly engaged in the calculation of the chances of every movement, and which took advantage of the most trifling circumstance that could be turned to the credit of the great account. Pusillanimous by nature, Ivan had the larger leisure for maturing his intrigues; and by the exercise of a system of stratagems in an age when physical force was the common appeal of nations, he vanquished his antagonists by bearing down on those points where they were the least prepared for resistance. Nor did he lose sight of the leading features of national superstition. He carefully sounded the depths of the Russian character, and, availing himself of the weaknesses of the people, did not

* It was supposed to have been a corruption of Cæsar, but it is not. It may be observed in the terminations of the names of the kings of Assyria and Babylon, as Phalassar, Nabonassar, &c. See Karamsin. The Russian interpreters always translate it by the word emperor.

suffer a solitary occasion to pass away without reaping from it some personal benefit under the mask of the public good. Thus, when he hung back on the banks of the Lugra, and fled from an inferior force, he converted even his disgrace to a glory, and was rewarded by the admiration and idolatry of his countrymen, who conferred upon him all the applause of a signal triumph, in which he not only had no share, but from which he turned in dismay. There was less, too, of cruelty than of artifice in his nature; for, although he never scrupled to execute summary and sanguinary vengeance where other means failed, yet he always deferred the adoption of such an alternative until the last extremity. This exhibition of placidity, which really sprang from a secret misgiving as to results, contributed in a great measure to check any ebullitions of popular distrust, if not to establish his empire more firmly in the good will of the people. Even the violation of his promises, usually sanctified by some plausible pretext of a patriotic description, and his reckless conduct towards the enemies of his throne and his religion, were easily excused, by a population that began to be accustomed to the interpositions of Divine Providence on behalf of their sovereign. They were induced, without much trouble, to believe that the prince who was so highly favoured by Heaven could not receive too much confidence and gratitude from man.

One of the most cunning strokes of his policy was his union with Sophia, the last princess of the Greek imperial family, who, when Byzantium had fallen into the hands of the Turks, had retired for refuge to the sacred walls of Rome. Ivan wisely availed himself of the national attachment to Constantinople and the race of its emperors. He knew that the Russians regarded the imperial city as the source of their religion; that it was endeared to them as the place from whence their primates were drawn, whose dignities were imposed by the Greek emperor himself; and that they regarded it with veneration because it conferred upon

them their written characters*, their vapour baths, a part of their usages, and the saints to whom they paid an idolatrous worship. He did not hesitate, therefore, to sue for the pope's consent to his entreaties that the last Greek princess should share with him the Muscovite throne, and confirm him in his autocracy by the presence of the two-headed eagle, the type of the supreme power. With the introduction of this new charm, which acted powerfully upon the affections of the people, came the infusion of the luxurious habits of the East, of the slavish nobility of a despotic court, of august forms and ceremonies in which trifles were raised into importance as the miniature representatives of the divine right, and of the arrogant assumptions and almost blasphemous majesty of the sovereign power. With this princess too was introduced those arts which the rude invasions of the Turks had banished from Constantinople, and which, having traversed Italy by the way, where they were probably still more refined and embellished, now sought refuge in the colder climate of Russia. If the alliance had not been productive of any other effect than that of securing the suffrages of the people, it was wisely conceived. The priests, who were the willing agents of a sentiment that was so admirably calculated to dignify and enforce their office, exclaimed that the illustrious lady was sent by the Almighty; that she would make another Byzantium of Moscow, and confer upon its grand princes all the rights of the Greek emperors. But it led to still more important consequences.

The main attention of the Russian princes had hitherto been directed to the East, to the broils within, and the predatory wars without. But the overthrow of Byzantium, which interrupted commerce in that quarter, and, by the destruction of the mighty empire which possessed the mastery of that part of the world,

* The Russian alphabet takes its date about the year 865. It was invented in Moravia by Constantine, who is distinguished in the old chronicles as a philosopher. He had been sent from Byzantium to render the Scriptures into the native language.

increased in an equal ratio the power and influence of Russia, drew the regards of the czar towards the nations of Europe, which had been advancing in civilisation with different degrees of prosperity, while the vast territories of the north were sunk in the sloth and ignorance of intestine divisions. The Russian monarch had been too much engaged in crushing the hydra-headed enemy at home, to make an opportunity for cultivating the alliance of those states in which political knowledge was making such rapid strides. All eyes were fascinated by the oriental magnificence and hierarchical splendour of Constantinople: but the adjustment of the domestic feuds, and the prostration of the Greek empire, with its train of attendant benefits, afforded the czar not only leisure to adapt his policy to the European courts, but suggested to him the necessity of elevating his throne to an equality with the loftiest amongst them.

The preliminaries to this design, extensive and imposing, were speedily carried into effect. The palace of the Kremlin, with its fortresses and church, arose in all the grandeur of eastern luxury and barbaric strength: miners and engineers, architects, founders, and minters, were invited from Germany and Italy into those icy regions which they hitherto trembled to penetrate, but where their skill and their labours were now liberally rewarded: the mines of Petchora were pierced; and the Russians, for the first time, received a coinage in silver and copper, designed and executed in their own capital. These dazzling events, to which were added pageants, and processions, and public entertainments on the most gorgeous and lavish scale, gave a new direction to the passions of the people. The arts and sciences had taken root amongst them, and Russia was no longer content to enjoy the unsocial advantages of her ancient habits. She aspired to a wider domain, in which intellect should struggle for the supremacy. But she did not yet quite understand the greatness of the moral power; and her mode of enforcing her claims to a fra-

ternity with the European governments was tinged with the tyrannical coarseness which ages of misrule and strife had generated.

In the various negotiations which Ivan opened at different times with other sovereigns, he observed a bearing of austere pride, which was calculated to retard the recognition of his rights. He even occasionally ascended to a mode of expression which could not fail to be offensive to those to whom it was addressed. On one occasion he referred the source of his authority to the high and holy Trinity, from which, he said, he had received the government of Russia. His diplomatic instructions were invariably distinguished by a haughtiness and insolence which implied a contempt for the monarchs with whom he was in treaty, or which, perhaps, betrayed his secret uneasiness lest they should deem him an intruder within the limits of civilisation. He maintained the pettiest forms, as types of his supremacy, with such strictness that he refused to receive the Austrian envoy, and even drove him from his presence because he had failed to comply with certain modes of courtesy; and he finally compelled the emperor to treat with him as his equal. To that monarch, who tempted him with the title of king, he replied, that he would not degrade himself by accepting titles from any prince on earth, and that he held his crown from God alone. In a correspondence with the sultan Bajazet, we find him demanding redress for certain acts of aggression committed by the Turks of Caffa upon some Russian merchants, in these terms: — "Whence do these acts of violence arise? Are you aware of them, or are you not? One word more: Mahomet, your father, was a great prince; he intended to have sent ambassadors to me to pay me a compliment, but God prevented the execution of his project. Why should it not now be accomplished?" In a few years afterwards he commanded his ambassador at the court of the sultan to be careful not to compromise the dignity of his master; to address the sultan standing, and not on his

knees; to address him in person, and not to yield precedence to any other representative. Thus the first point of imitation of European customs to which the crafty Ivan addressed his genius, was that which involved the dignity of his throne. He believed that in securing that, however much he might offend at first by the determination and rudeness of his style, he should gain the most important step towards the future aggrandisement of the empire.

This rapid and important change in the spirit of the Russian government could not, however, be effected without exciting some jealousies on the part of the class who had hitherto exercised a species of subordinate despotism in the affairs of the empire. The boyards, or nobles, had preserved to themselves extraordinary rights during the incessant conflicts of the princes, and the grand princes were glad to recognise and confirm their claims in order to render their own position the more secure. But now that civilisation was begining to spread, and the excessive privileges of the boyards were becoming oppressive in proportion as the knowledge of the people advanced, that haughty and arbitrary body exhibited unequivocal symptoms of discontent, which even the fear of the czar's resentment could hardly repress. Occasions frequently offered for showing this feeling in detail, but an event of grave consequence afforded them a plausible excuse for publicly remonstrating against those proceedings that threatened Russia with a new system of government.

The death of Ivan's eldest son, the issue of a first marriage, brought them to the foot of the throne to sue on behalf of the claims of that son's heir to the succession; but Ivan, piqued at the tone of their complaints, and resolved to dictate even at the risk of a great principle of conservation, repelled them with indignation, cast his grandson into a dungeon, and conferred upon his son by the Greek princess the right of succession to the throne. This was what the boyards apprehended. They desired to fix some charge upon the czarina that

might bring her into disfavour with Ivan, and did not scruple at innuendos and open accusations of the most daring character. For a time they overcame the determinations of the autocrat, and even succeeded so far as to induce him to disgrace his wife: but he was soon awakened to the real object they had in view, and with equal promptitude restored her to his favour. The boyards, however, had arranged their conspiracy so effectually, that they stirred up the old republic of Pskof to venture upon an expostulation on behalf of the elder branch; but this new demonstration of disaffection, the purport of which was now visible to Ivan, only had the effect of rendering him still more arbitrary, and produced from him that celebrated declaration, which is an admirable type of this phase of his character, that "he would give Russia to whom he liked."

Resolved to destroy those distinctive immunities, upon the influence of which the boyards rested in this sinister attempt to drive out the czarina, and with her the arts and sciences, in the light of which their power was rapidly dissolving, Ivan deprived them in the first instance of their ancient right of transferring their service to any other prince possessed of an appanage. He rigidly forbade their removal from such offices about his own court, or elsewhere, as he thought proper to select for them; abrogating at the same time their application of the hereditary principle to the offices which many of them had hitherto inherited from father to son. By measures of this kind, he degraded them in their rank, hurt their personal dignity, and reduced them to a situation of court servitude. In order to make their fall the more sure, he increased the petty offices of attendance about his court and person, until at last he completely absorbed them in his train. Nor did he rest satisfied with this slow, but certain, triumph over his discontented servants: he seized upon those who were detected intermeddling in the recent intrigues, and, without pausing to tender any respect to their high rank, which had hitherto protected them from acts of summary

violence, he sacrificed them peremptorily to his vengeance. The astonishment with which these bold sentences, so rapidly pronounced and executed, were received by the people, hastened the decline of the almost irresponsible power of the nobility, and increased to an extravagant height the supreme power of the throne. Throughout the whole of these fierce measures, Ivan was careful to avail himself of every opportunity of exhibiting and extending the iron autocracy he had reared amidst such conflicting elements.

In the pursuit of this object, he was courageous and indefatigable. If in the field he betrayed a lack of nerve, in the cabinet he showed a degree of imperturbability which invested him with impunity. The waive of his hand, and the sound of his voice, were decisive. No impediments retarded, no resistance repelled him. Even the influence, personal and corporate, of the church was not too powerful for him, when he found it necessary to the complete establishment of his own rule to coerce the clergy. The particular occasion which brought him into collision with the ecclesiastics, was the introduction of a Jewish heresy into the church. The doctrines of this heresy were sufficiently singular and absurd. Some of the clergy, with the primate Zosimus at their head, had fallen into the Hebrew notion that the advent of the Messiah was yet to come; and from this unchristian tenet sprang a multitude of irreverent and blasphemous opinions and practices. The heretics exhibited their zeal in the new faith by denying, and even casting odium upon, Christ and the Virgin Mary; by desecrating the saints, spitting upon them, and trampling their broken fragments under foot; and by publicly denouncing the belief in Paradise, and the doctrine of the resurrection. Finally, these people avowed their implicit reliance upon the behests of some cabalistical book, said to have been bestowed upon Adam by the Creator; from which book they declared that Solomon derived all his wisdom, and the elder prophets their knowledge of the future, their faculty of divin-

ation, and their control over the elements of nature, and the living things to which they gave birth. The popularity of the clergy had been so great, that Ivan apprehended, and not without good reason, that if these heresies were permitted to be preached, and to take root amongst the people, the next proceeding of those ministers whose influence should thus have broken up the allegiance of the Russians to their spiritual lord, would be to detach them from their allegiance to their temporal master. It was less, perhaps, from tenderness to religion, than from a wary guardianship of the throne, that he resolved to extirpate the dangerous scepticism at once. He accordingly confiscated the property of such of the clergy as had come within his displeasure, banished the heretics from the empire, caused the heresy to be anathematised, and appointed a new primate, whose inauguration he undertook with his own hands; thus establishing his supremacy over the church in a degree equal to that which he exercised over every department of the state. These measures were conclusive. The clergy gave way before his authority; the heresy was extinguished, and the power of the throne confirmed.

The internal policy of the empire under the administration of this ambitious monarch was distinguished by principles of classification, which had not hitherto ameliorated the feudal harshness of its laws. The people, instead of being irregularly taxed at the will and caprice of their immediate lord, were now subjected to a uniform code of taxation. Their right of changing their servitude from one fief to another was more explicitly declared, and distinctly taxed. The boyards, who, of necessity, still retained in their hands, in virtue of the local rank they possessed, the dispensing power of adjudicating punishments and pronouncing verdicts, were kept in check by a new regulation, which associated with them, in the discharge of these important functions, the elders of the district and the established civil functionary. The jurisdiction of the military and civil services was defined; the stations of the police were

marked and clearly organised; and the roads throughout the most populated parts of the empire were better laid down, and the trusts connected with them more correctly discharged. Thus something resembling order was established. The first rush of civilisation had done much in dispelling the confused usages of the country; but it remained for Ivan to take advantage of the opportunity, and to reduce the whole to system. His criminal code can hardly be viewed as a fair specimen of the principles which, under more favourable circumstances, he might have desired to introduce. He could not on the sudden reform those practices which long habit had rendered national, nor succeed in persuading the people, until the force of accumulated proofs had prevailed over their ignorance, that the mild and equitable adjustment of punishments to offences of which other nations showed the example, was wiser or better than their own more sanguinary institutes. His code of laws, therefore, retains many of the ancient severities, softened, however, by being better disciplined and more fully explained. The old feudal provision of the *duello* was preserved by Ivan as the last resort in the majority of criminal accusations; and torture was allowed to be called in where the suspicion of guilt was grounded upon unsatisfactory circumstantial evidence. The remaining punishments were in accordance with the character of the age, and owed to Ivan the strictness with which they were defined, being no longer left loosely and vaguely to the capricious interpretation of the judge. They consisted in the confiscation of the effects of the condemned, in the application of the knout, in condemnation to slavery in the mines, and, lastly, in that final award which was ordained with indiscriminate cruelty, — the execution of the delinquent.

Such were the chief outlines of the institutions, and such the prominent features of the character and life of Ivan III., who retains in the annals of his country the distinguished appellation of Ivan the Great. The concentration of the power of Russia, the extension of her

immense territories by an accession of 19,000 square miles and 4,000,000 subjects; which carried her boundary lines as far as Kief in one direction, and Kasan in another, and from Siberia to Lapland; and the regulation of the machinery of administration which spread over this great surface; entitle him to the place he occupies in history. He rent, as an historian emphatically expresses it, the veil which concealed Russia from Europe. He was the first to cultivate the arts of civilisation; and, even if his object was rather to dazzle and subdue his subjects than to enlighten them, we cannot refuse to acknowledge the important effects which his energy, craftiness, and selfishness produced.

After a reign of forty-three years, Ivan died in 1505, and was succeeded by Vassili Ivanovitch, the son of the czarina Sophia of Byzantium.

CHAP. XIII.

VASSILI IVANOVITCH. — IVAN IV., SURNAMED THE TERRIBLE — ATROCITIES OF HIS YOUTH. — INTERVAL OF MODERATION. — DISCOVERY OF SIBERIA. — RUSSIA IS INVADED BY A POLISH ARMY. — IVAN GOES INTO RETIREMEVT. — FORMATION OF THE OPRITSHNINA, OR SELECT LEGION, AFTERWARDS KNOWN AS THE STRELITZ. — REIGN OF TERROR. — MARCH OF EXTERMINATION. — FRIGHTFUL MASSACRES. — IVAN ASKS AN ASYLUM FROM QUEEN ELIZABETH. — HE MURDERS HIS SON. — HIS DEATH, AND CHARACTER.

During the latter part of the reign of Ivan, disturbances had frequently broken out amongst the Tartars of Kazan, who made many efforts to shake off the burthens that prince had imposed upon them. They carried their rebellion to such an extremity, that they even set up a new khan in defiance of the supreme government of Moscow. Ivan, however, affected to consent to this infringement of the existing relations between the throne and the subjugated province, but he appointed a Russian boyard to assist the khan in the administration, whose real office was to neutralise the khan's authority. This appointment was received by the Tartars with marked jealousy, but the increasing strength of the czar at home and abroad checked them in the expression of their discontent. They submitted reluctantly, during the remaining years of Ivan's life, to a yoke which they detested; but upon his death, resolving to cast off their chains, they rose *en masse*, and murdered the unpopular Russian vicegerent.

This was an unpropitious opening to the reign of the young monarch; and for several years, his efforts to repress the insurrection, occupied as he was in various other quarters in the more important duty of carrying his father's principles into full operation, were attended with uncertain and variable results. At last the Tartars, flushed with slight successes, united themselves to

the Tartars of the Crimea, audaciously marched into the interior, and appeared even at the gates of Moscow. Upon that occasion, we are informed that they actually made 300,000 prisoners, whom they afterwards exposed for sale at Caffa in the Crimea, where they were purchased as slaves by the Turks. The abruptness of this movement caused some alarm in the capital; but Vassili, in the same spirit of cunning and intrigue that distinguished his predecessor, purchased them off by costly presents and flattering promises of granting to them a new oath of allegiance. The Tartars, deceived into acquiescence, retired: but they were no sooner gone, than Vassili set about constructing measures for their destruction. By a double course of stratagem and hostility, he finally succeeded in re-capturing Kazan, and in making severe examples of the refractory belligerents.

While he was engaged in this petty strife, the city of Pskof, which, having once been the rival of Novgorod, had imbibed much of the licentiousness which prevailed in the republics, betrayed some expiring signs of independence. The first indications of this desire to release itself from the bonds of the empire, were met by Vassili with the same exhausting opposition which had before drained it of its strength. He made fresh levies amongst the people, crippled their commercial resources, and extracted from them all the means of resistance they possessed. Thus subdued, they sunk back again powerless beneath the Muscovite rule.

The destinies of these places accomplished, there remained no further conquests but that of Severia, the last principality which maintained a distinct and separate existence. Vassili did not wait for a very strong provocation to enter upon the agreeable work of subjugation. He accused the reigning prince of a design to place himself under the protection of Poland, and, with little difficulty, cast him into prison; and seizing upon his territories, annexed them to the empire, which was now again united under the sovereign head.

The reign of Vassili embraced no other events of

interest. He was chiefly employed in fulfilling the plans of his father; and that he succeeded in effecting that object is evidenced by the fact, that after a reign of twenty-eight years, he bequeathed Russia, enlarged, improved, and perfectly consolidated, to his infant son, Ivan IV.

On the death of his father, Ivan was only three years of age. Helena, his mother, a woman unfit for the toils of government, impure in her conduct, and without judgment, assumed the office of regent, which she shared with a paramour, whose elevation to such a height caused universal disgust, particularly among the princes of the blood and the nobility. The measures which had of late years been adopted towards the boyards were not forgotten by that haughty class; and now that the infirm state of the throne gave them a fair pretext for complaint, they conspired against the regent, partly with a view to remove so unpopular and degraded a person from the imperial seat, but principally that they might take advantage of the minority of the czar, and seize upon the empire for their own ends. The circumstances in which the death of Vassili left the country were favourable to these designs. The licentiousness that prevailed at court, the absence of a strict and responsible head, and the confusion that generally took the place of the order that had previously prevailed, assisted the treacherous nobles in their treasonable projects. They had long panted for revenge and restitution, and the time seemed to be ripe for the execution of their plans.

Amongst the most prominent members of this patrician league, were the three paternal uncles of the young prince. They made no scruple of exhibiting their feelings; and they at last grew so clamorous, that the regent, on the ground that they entertained designs upon the throne, condemned them to loathsome dungeons, where they died in lingering torments. Their followers and abettors suffered by torture and the worst kinds of ignominious punishment. These examples

spread such consternation amongst the rest of the conspirators, that they fled to Lithuania and the Crimea, where they endeavoured to inspire a sympathy in their misfortunes. But the regent, whose time appears to have been solely dedicated to the worst description of pleasures, being unable to preserve herself without despotism, succeeded in overcoming the enemies whom her own conduct was so mainly instrumental in creating.

The reign of lascivious folly and wanton rigour was not, however, destined to survive the wrath of the nobles. For five years, intestine jealousies and thickening plots plunged the country into anarchy; and, at last, the regent died suddenly, having, it is believed, fallen by poison administered through the agency of the revengeful boyards. The spectacle of one criminal executing summary justice upon another, is not destitute of some moral utility; and in this case it might have had its beneficial influence, were it not that the principal conspirators had no sooner taken off the regent than they violently seized upon the guardianship of the throne.

The foremost persons in this drama were the Schuisky — a family that had long been treated with suspicion by the czars, their insolent bearing having always exposed them to distrust. Prince Schuisky was appointed president of the council of the boyards, to whom the administration of affairs was confided, and although his malignant purposes were kept in check by the crowd of equally ambitious persons that surrounded him, he possessed sufficient opportunities to consummate a variety of wrongs upon the resources of the state and upon obnoxious individuals — thus revenging himself indiscriminately for the ancient injuries his race had suffered. During this iniquitous rule, which exhibited the extraordinary features of a government composed of persons with different interests, pressing forward to the same end, and making a common prey of the trust that was reposed in their hands, Russia was despoiled in every

quarter. The Tartars, freed for a season from the watchful vigilance of the throne, roamed at large through the provinces, pillaging and slaying wherever they went; and this enormous guilt was crowned by the rapacious exactions and sanguinary proscriptions of the council. The young Ivan was subjected to the most brutal insults: his education was designedly neglected; he was kept in total ignorance of public affairs, that he might be rendered unqualified to assume the hereditary power; and prince Schuisky, in the midst of these base intrigues against the future czar, was often seen to treat him in a contemptuous and degrading manner. On one occasion he stretched forth his legs, and pressed the weight of his feet on the body of the boy. Perhaps these unexampled provocations, and the privations to which he was condemned, produced the germs of a character which was afterwards developed in such terrible magnificence. The fiend that lived in the heart of Ivan might not have been born with him; it was probably generated by the cruelties and wrongs that were practised on his youth.

In vain the Belsky, moderate and wise, and the primate, influenced by the purest motives, remonstrated against the ruinous proceedings of the council. The voice of admonition was lost in the hideous orgies of the boyards, until a sudden invasion by the Tartars awakened them to a sense of their peril. They rallied, order was restored, and Russia was preserved. But the danger was no sooner over than the Schuisky returned in all their former strength, seized upon Moscow in the dead of the night, penetrated to the couch of Ivan, and, dragging him out in his sleep, endeavoured to destroy his intellect by filling him with sudden terror. The primate, whose mild representations had displeased them, was ill-treated and deposed; and the prince Belsky, who could not be prevailed upon to link his fortunes with their desperate courses, was murdered in the height of their frenzy. Even those members of their own body, who, touched by some intermittent pity,

ventured to expostulate, were beaten in the chamber of their deliberations, and cast out from amongst them.

Under such unpropitious auspices as these, the young Ivan, the inheritor of a consolidated empire, grew up to manhood. His disposition, naturally fierce, headstrong, and vindictive, was most insidiously cultivated into ferocity by the artful counsellors that surrounded him. His earliest amusements were the torture of wild animals, the ignoble feat of riding over old men and women, flinging stones from ambuscades upon the passers by, and precipitating dogs and cats from the summit of his palace. Such entertainments as these, the sport of boyhood, gave unfortunately too correct a prognostic of the fatal career that lay before him. By a curious retribution, the first exercise of this terrible temper in its application to humanity fell upon the Schuisky, who certainly, of all mankind, best merited its infliction. When Ivan was in his thirteenth year, he accompanied a hunting party at which prince Gluisky — another factious lord—and the president of the council were present. Gluisky, himself a violent and remorseless man, envied the ascendancy of Schuisky, and prompted the young prince to address him in words of great heat and insult. Schuisky, astonished at the youth's boldness, replied in anger. This was sufficient provocation. Ivan gave way to his rage, and, on a concerted signal, Schuisky was dragged out into the public streets, and worried alive by dogs in the open daylight. The wretch expiated a life of guilt by the most horrible agonies.

Thus freed from one tyranny, Ivan was destined for another, which, however, accepted him as its nominal head, urging him onward to acts of blood which were but too congenial to his taste. The Gluisky, having got rid of their formidable competitor in the race of crime, now assumed the direction of affairs. Under their administration, the prince was led to the commission of the most extravagant atrocities; and the doctrine was inculcated upon his mind, that the only way to assert authority was by manifesting the extremity of its wrath.

He was taught to believe that power consisted in oppression. They applauded each fresh instance of vengeance; and initiated him into a short method of relieving himself from every person who troubled or offended him, by sacrificing the victim on the spot.

This terrible system continued for three years. The pupilage of the prince was an uninterrupted scene of horror; and he was crowned czar of all the Russias in his eighteenth year, after a minority of blood. The citizens, unsafe and trembling under a despotism which was so capricious in its enormities, were at length driven to desperation. They fired the city in several places one night; and Ivan awoke the next morning amidst flame and smoke, the tossing of brands, and the imprecations of the multitude. He had been accustomed to terrors, but this conflagration smote him to the heart. In the midst of the confusion, Sylvester, a monk belonging to that roving order of persons who then wandered through the country affecting to be inspired with a divine mission, suddenly appeared in the presence of the affrighted despot. With a Gospel in one hand, while the other was raised in an attitude of prophecy, he pointed to the ruins that surrounded him, and invoking the attention of the prince to the consequences of his infatuation, he dwelt upon certain appearances from heaven which prognosticated evil to the dynasty if these courses were not abandoned; and, working powerfully upon a mind already agonised with fear, he finally succeeded in gaining a complete ascendancy over the czar. The effect was sudden and extraordinary. The virtuous Alexis Adascheff aided Sylvester in his efforts to reclaim Ivan; and these, assisted by the gentle persuasions of the beautiful Anastatia, his young consort whom he had but recently married, appeared to produce a strong impression upon his feelings.

The result was an entire change in the system of government. Able and upright men displaced the corrupt and audacious counsellors who had hitherto filled the empire with alarm; a new organisation of the army

took place; a just assessment of the fiefs, the various services, and contingents, was established; proprietors of estates were obliged to contribute to the maintenance of the military strength according to their means; and by a bonus in the pay of the soldiery, which was now adopted, the available force of the country was raised to the number of 300,000 men. Thus strengthened, with prudent ministers and a powerful army, Ivan set himself to the worthy task of subduing the rebellious Tartars. His ardour even appears to have carried him into extremes, for in the depth of winter he marched at the head of the soldiery to the siege of Kazan, although his followers did not hesitate to declare that no good commander would think of conducting his troops in so rigorous a season into the quarters of the enemy. But such ebullitions of discontent were punished with so much severity, that the troops soon learned to be content with the severities which procured such victories as Ivan was fortunate enough to gain. The first measure of great utility which he accomplished, was the erection of forts on the frontier to repel the aggressions of the enemy; but apprehending that even these were not sufficient to deter the marauders, he advanced upon Kazan, and captured it by springing a mine,—a proces, in the art of war which was quite novel to the Russians, and filled them with astonishment and admiration. Having taken the city, he turned the mosques of the Tartars into Christian temples, and caused the khan to be baptised; which proofs of his religious zeal were admirably calculated to ingratiate him in the regards of the people.

In one of those ecstatic moods which sometimes assail the better judgment of the old chroniclers, the Russian historian informs us that Ivan, upon entering Kazan, wept at the sight of the dead bodies with which the streets were strewn. We certainly cannot put in any evidence in disproof of this apocryphal assertion, but the picture of "Nero fiddling while Rome was burning" is even more probable.

In addition to his successes at Kazan, Ivan was triumphant in the kingdom of Astracan, which he afterwards annexed to the Russian empire. This acquisition was very valuable, as in that district the vine, and other rich productions of the soil, grew in remarkable luxuriance. Fortune seemed on all hands to favour the interval of grace that visited the czar. While he was pursuing his course of victory in other places, 80,000 Turks, who had been despatched by Selim II. against Astracan, perished in the desolate steppes by which it was surrounded. The wars were thus terminated in glorious and important achievements, which laid the foundations of that expanded commerce which afterwards rendered illustrious the era of one of the greatest monarchs the world ever produced.

But the most important event which distinguished this period of the reign of Ivan was the discovery of Siberia, an empire of extraordinary magnitude, producing the richest firs, and studded with inexhaustible mines of salt, copper, and silver. The discovery was accidental, and caused at first so slight a degree of attention, that it was suffered to be forgotten until another accident, some years afterwards, recalled it to the consideration of the government. A body of men, who had been sent across the Ingrian mountains by the czar, penetrated as far as the banks of the Oley; but the discoveries they reported were either so imperfect, or so ill-described, that they were passed over in silence. It subsequently occurred, however, that a merchant of the name of Strogonoff, who was the proprietor of some salt mines on the confines of Siberia, had his curiosity stimulated by several persons who traded with him, and whose strange costume and foreign manners excited in him a desire to become acquainted with the interior of the country from whence they came. Accordingly he commissioned a few of his people to return with them into Siberia, and to collect such information respecting it as their opportunities might enable them to acquire. These people, having explored the unknown districts,

which they found to be inhabited by a race of Tartars, who possessed a capital called Sibir, returned to their employer charged with a history of wonders, and a quantity of costly furs, which promised to open a new source of gain to the diligent merchant. Strogonoff, however, resolved not to keep the knowledge he had thus attained exclusively to himself, and immediately communicated all he knew to the court. In the mean time, Yermak, a Don Cossack adventurer, who, at the head of a gang of those lawless robbers, infested the roads, plundering the inhabitants and travellers in that part of Russia, happened to come, accidentally, to the merchant's dwelling, on his flight from some Russian troops that had been sent in search of him. While he remained there, he learned by chance, from Strogonoff, of the newly discovered land; and he and his band, being persons who had nothing to lose, and who subsisted solely by desperate predatory practices, resolved to enter the strange country, and seek in its unknown retreats a source of safety and support. The resistance this adventurer experienced from the Siberians greatly thinned the ranks of his daring troops; but the forlorn character of the expedition inspired them with reckless valour; and, after many exhausting conflicts, they finally over-ran the country, and made themselves master of the capital. Yermak now bethought him of what he should do with his perilous conquest; and seeing that he possessed no means of accumulating sovereign power, or even of possessing by tribute, or otherwise, so vast a territory, he threw himself at the feet of the czar, tendered to him the territory he had won, and solicited in return a full pardon for all the delinquencies he and his followers had committed. Ivan readily granted the pardon, and took possession of his new acquisition. The work of annexation went rapidly forward. Several commodious towns were built, strong forts were constructed, the mines were garrisoned, and that great expanse of desert and mountains, which was afterwards destined to become the convict settlement

of Russia, was formally and permanently consolidated in the dominions of the autocrat.

The civil and social improvement of the empire kept pace with the armed progress. A number of celebrated artists were engaged from the dominions, and by the permission, of Charles V.; the art of letterpress printing was introduced, and the first type that ever was seen in Russia was imported by Ivan; the northern parts were opened to a new mercantile intercourse; and Archangel was established. The laws were revised; and the fees of the governors of the provinces who administered justice, paying themselves by pecuniary mulcts on the suitors, were abolished, and in their place gratuitous justice was administered, and a general assessment levied, which was collected by officers appointed by government. The grasping demands of the clergy were restrained, their revenues placed upon a more equitable basis, and their morals improved by mild but decisive restrictions.

Such were the fruits of the influence of Anastatia, which procured a hearing for the wisdom of Alexis and Sylvester. While that amiable and enlightened lady lived, Ivan pursued a course of just and wise measures that reflected honour upon his name, and conferred extensive benefits upon his country. But the latent nature was not extinguished: it only slept, hushed into slumber by the sweet influences before which his savage dispositions were subdued. An old bishop, who had formerly been banished from the court on account of his crimes, and who was one day consulted by Ivan, replied to the czar in some memorable words which were ever afterwards cherished in his memory, and were not without their power over his subsequent life. "If you wish," exclaimed the bishop, "to be truly a sovereign, never seek a counsellor wiser than yourself; never receive advice from any man. Command, but never obey; and you will be a terror to the boyards. Remember that he who is permitted to begin by *advising*, is certain to end by *ruling* his sovereign." Ivan,

kissing the old man's hand, is said to have answered, "My own father could not have spoken more wisely!" This remarkable advice, — similar to that which is attributed to a celebrated cardinal of modern times, on his death-bed, — seems to have governed the conduct of Ivan from the moment that the death of the princess Anastatia released him from the embarrassment of her councils. She died in 1560, after having restrained the imperial demon for thirteen years.

The incarnate fiend, relieved from the oppressive presence of virtue, resumed at once his original nature. If the narrative of his crimes could be spared from the page of history, it would rescue us from a series of details, the very relation of which must sicken the least susceptible mind. But there was a passion so unearthly in this paragon of monsters, — he was so elevated in atrocity, and reached so sublime a height in the perpetration of cruelties, — that his life, incredible and disgusting as it is, fills too great a space in the annals of despotism to be passed over lightly. One of his historians charitably supposes him to have been a lunatic; and we should willingly adopt that view of his wretched existence, were there not so many incontrovertible proofs of the reasoning process scattered through his actions to satisfy us that his guilt was the result of a deliberate love of sanguinary violence, of resistance to the ordinances of society, of all the vices that attend upon the ungoverned passions, of falsehood, of revenge, and of witnessing the agonies and miseries which his lofty station enabled him to inflict upon his fellow creatures. It appears extraordinary that such a being should have lived upon earth; but it is still more extraordinary that his people should have suffered him to live.

The first act of Ivan was to banish his prudent advisers, the men who had hitherto preserved him from the worst calamities. Those persons were replaced by others, who studiously laboured to destroy their predecessors by false stories of their treachery to the czarina,

whose death was unequivocally laid to their charge. That weakness, or superstition, which is an inherent quality in all savage natures, led Ivan to believe, or to fancy that he believed, those absurd accusations; and he acted with promptitude upon the miserable excuse which they afforded him. He hunted the partisans of the late ministers wherever they could be detected; some he put to the most disgraceful deaths, others he imprisoned or banished, varying the monotony of their solitary lives by the infliction of exquisite tortures. One prince, who refused to join in the lascivious pleasures of the court, was poniarded at prayers in the church; and another was stabbed to the heart by the czar's own hand, because he had the presumption to remonstrate with one of the new favourites. The prince Andrew Kurbsky, a noble who, both in the cabinet and the field, had rendered the most important services to the government and the country, received intimation that a similar fate awaited him; and, indignant at the prospect of such an unworthy return for his devotion to the throne of the czars, he retired into Lithuania, and united himself with Sigismond, the king of Poland, and, at that time, one of the most formidable enemies of Russia. This revolt maddened Ivan beyond control; and his exasperation was increased by the receipt of a letter from the prince, in which he boldly charged the czar with all the miseries that were entailed upon their common country, with having shed the blood of Israel's elders in the temples of the Lord; and wound up by threatening him with the vengeance of that tribunal before which he must one day answer to the accusations of the spirits of the murdered. The messenger who was daring enough to present this epistle to the czar, suffered for his temerity. Ivan, on learning from whence he came, struck him across the legs with an iron rod which he usually carried in his hand; and while the blood flowed copiously from the wounds, leaned unconcernedly upon his rod to read the rebellious letter. The correspondence that ensued upon

this occasion, like all the correspondence of Ivan's which has come down to us, is remarkable for the most blasphemous presumption and arrogant hyperbole. He wrote all his letters with his own hand, and was proud of his literary attainments, which, had they been directed into worthier channels, might have rendered him a distinguished ornament of his age.*

The consequence of the disaffection of Kurbsky was the enrolment of a Polish army with a view to a descent upon Russia, and an invasion of the southern provinces by the Tartars at the instigation of Sigismond. This demonstration increased the rage of the czar: he treated every body around him as if they were the creatures of Kurbsky: he distrusted every body; and put numbers to the rack and to death on the bare suspicion of their guilt, and was overheard to lament that he could not find victims enough to satisfy his wrath. He charged the boyards indiscriminately with harbouring secret designs against the welfare and

* A characteristic specimen of Ivan's reply to prince Kurbsky is worth preservation as an example of the extraordinary style in which this unparalleled despot indulged. "Why, thou wretch," exclaims the czar, after a prelude in which he apostrophises God Almighty, "dost thou destroy thy traitor soul, in saving by flight thy worthless body? If thou art really honest and virtuous, why not die by the hand of thy master, and thereby obtain the crown of the martyrs? What is life? What are earthly pomps and riches? Vanity! a shadow!" After replying to some of Kurbsky's specific charges, he continues — "What thou assertest of my assumed cruelties is an impudent lie. I do *not* destroy the elders of Israel, nor do I stain with their blood the Lord's temples: the peaceful and the religious live happily in my service. Against traitors alone I am severe: but who ever spared them? Did not Constantine the Great sacrifice his only son?" Farther on he adds — "Thou tellest me that I never again shall see thy Ethiop face: heavens! what a misfortune! Thou surroundest the throne of the Highest with those I have put to death — a new heresy! *No one*, saith the apostle, can see God." And then this epistle goes on to add — "But I am silent, for Solomon forbids us to waste words with fools like thee." A better specimen of the special nature and insulting character of his epistles is to be found in his letter to the king of Sweden, in consequence of an attempt made by Ivan to secure the person of Christina, queen of Sweden, upon a false report of the king's death. After exonerating himself from the charge of desiring to obtain the queen for any unworthy ends, he goes on to say — "What care I for thy wife? Is she worth the undertaking of a war? Many daughters of Polish kings have married grooms and varlets: ask well-informed people who Sovidilo was, in the time of Jagellon Dost thou think I care more for king Eric?" — Again: "Tell me whose son was thy father? What was thy grandfather's name? If I am wrong in believing, at this very day, that thou art sprung from some low fellow or other, send me thy genealogy to convince me of my error." For a fuller view of Ivan's correspondence, the curious may consult Karamin, vol. ix.

happiness of the state; he dispossessed many of them of their private fortunes; and in a letter which is still extant, he urged against them as crimes, all the benefits which the sane portion of his rule had conferred upon Russia. In this delirium of the fever of despotism, the clergy remonstrated with some firmness; and, in order to obtain a fresh excuse for making new victims, he adopted an expedient as unexpected as it was singular. He caused a report to be spread on the sudden, that he was about to leave Moscow; but the point of his destination, or the reason of his withdrawal were preserved as profound secrets. The mystery of this announcement created a panic at Moscow. The people knew not what was to come next,—whether the tyrant was about to put some scheme of universal destruction into execution, or whether it was merely a prelude to some extravagant exhibition of superstitious credulity, which always assumed in their eyes the aspect of religious devotion. Agreeably to this vague announcement of the czar's design, one morning in December, at an early hour, the great square of the Kremlin was filled with travelling sledges—some of which contained gold and silver, others clothes, and not a few crosses, images, and the relics of saints. These preparations attracted crowds of astonished gazers, who looked on in stupid wonder at the extraordinary sight. In a few minutes the czar, followed by his family, was seen to descend from the palace, with the officers of his household, and a numerous retinue. From the palace he passed on to the Church of the Assumption; and, having ordered the metropolitan to celebrate mass, he prayed with great devotion, and received the blessing of Athanasius. Returning from the church, he held out his hand to the assembled multitudes, that they might satisfy themselves with a farewell kiss; and then, having in silence, and with unusual solemnity, walked through the groups that beset his path, he mounted his sledge, and drove off accompanied by a regiment of horse. The inhabitants of Moscow, as-

tonished and terror-struck by the scene, were lost in conjecture. The city was without a government. Ivan had so dexterously contrived to impress them with an idea that he derived his sovereignty from God, that he found no great difficulty ultimately in confounding to the imagination of an enslaved and uninstructed people the distinction between God and the sovereign; and in every crisis of disaster that occurred, the people fell back upon their fanaticism, and looked to the czar for that succour which could alone come from Heaven. Deserted at this moment by Ivan, they began to believe that they were deserted by Omnipotence.

A month elapsed, and no tidings were received of the destination or proceedings of the czar. At length, at the end of that period, two letters were received from him; the one addressed to the metropolitan, the other to the people. The former epistle contained a recapitulation of the disorders that had prevailed during his minority, all of which he attributed to the clergy and the boyards; and he asserted that similar crimes against the majesty of the state were about to break out anew. He also complained that his attempts to secure the public tranquillity were constantly thwarted by the evil interference of Athanasius and the clergy; that, therefore, he had abandoned the helm of affairs, and had left Moscow to wander about the earth. In his letter to the people, he assured them of his good will, repeated that he had no cause of complaint against them, and concluded by bidding them farewell for ever. It appeared by his epistles that he had entrenched himself in Alexandrovsky, a distant fortress that lay in the depths of a gloomy forest.

These communications spread dismay amongst the Muscovites. Ivan's severity towards the nobility and clergy had, even against the grain of reason, procured him no inconsiderable popularity with the bulk of the people; and on this occasion it broke forth in lamentations, which derived much of their force from the asso-

ciation of the ideas of the throne of the czar and the throne of Heaven. Groups of disconsolate citizens assembled in the street to confer upon what was to be done; the shops were shut, the tribunals of justice and public offices were closed, and every kind of business was suspended. "The czar," they exclaimed, "has forsaken us, and we are lost. Who will now defend us against the enemy? what are sheep without the shepherd?" In this state of despair a deputation of the principal inhabitants waited upon the metropolitan, and besought of him to solicit Ivan to return to his faithful subjects. Frantic with desperate zeal, they cried, "Let him punish all those who deserve it; has he not the power of life and death? The state cannot remain without a head, and we will not acknowledge any other than the one God has given us." It was at last resolved that a numerous body of prelates and nobles should hasten to Alexandrovsky, prostrate themselves on the dust before Ivan, and entreat of him to return to Moscow. This proceeding had the desired effect. They discovered Ivan in his retreat, struck the ground before him with their heads, and supplicated him for the sake of the souls of millions, which were now perishing in his absence as the head of the orthodox church, to resume his holy functions. This was what Ivan wanted: he affected to be much moved by their prayers, and with a show of reluctance consented to return, provided the clergy pledged themselves not to interfere whenever he found it necessary to punish those who engaged in conspiracies against the state, or against him or his family. This artful condition was immediately granted; and the magnanimity of a tyrant who thus entrapped the people into an admission of the necessity of his despotic proceedings, was extolled to the skies.

The restoration of the despot was received with acclamations; but the Muscovites were astonished by the great alteration which had taken place in his personal appearance during his absence. Only a month, say their historians, had elapsed, yet they hardly knew him

again. His powerful and muscular body, his expanded chest, and robust limbs, had shrunk to a skeleton; his head, once covered with luxuriant locks, was now bald; his rich and flowing beard was reduced to a few ragged stumps; his eyes were dull; and his features, stamped with a ravenous ferocity, were now deformed by apparent thought and anguish. Yet these sad changes—the fearful effects of the incessant tortures of a mind bewildered by its own fury—excited the sympathies of the infatuated citizens who beheld them.

After his entry into Moscow he addressed the people, again expatiating on the crimes of the boyards and the necessity for exercising the dominant sovereign sway in its extreme development. To this succeeded a pious exhortation on the vanities of the world — one of the arguments by which he endeavoured to reconcile his victims to their miserable fate — which he concluded by a proposal to institute a new body-guard, to be composed of 1000 men of noble birth, chosen from the general body of the army, and to be called the Opritshnina, or Select Legion. The people, blind to the danger of conceding so great a power to the sovereign, willingly acceded to this proposal, the execution of which was but a new instrument for destroying their liberties. The select legion, better known in subsequent years by the name of the Strelitz, was the foundation of a regular standing army in Russia; for until the formation of that corps the military force of the empire was raised upon occasions, each nobleman contributing according to his ability to meet the exigencies of the demand.*

* The Opritshnina, composed at first, or proposed to be composed, of men of noble birth, was really filled by persons of the lowest class, who acted in the capacity of spies, informers, and assassins. Their duty was to massacre all those persons who incurred the displeasure of the czar, and the confiscated property was transferred to the executioners; so that a new race, without the prejudices, habitudes, or principles of the old nobility, were thus gradually raised up to supply their place, forming a pliant instrument for the despotic designs of the sovereign. The duty of this guard was to find out disaffected persons, and to denounce them; and, as the delator was entitled to the effects of the accused, their accusations were frequent, and the charges generally false. The mode of execution frequently consisted in giving up the victim to be torn to pieces by bears.

This was the first step to the new reign of terror; and while the select legion was in course of formation, Ivan employed himself in the erection of a new palace outside the walls of the Kremlin; for it appears that his ambition or his fears produced in him a disrelish for the ancient residence of the royal family. In order to build this unnecessary palace, he drove out all the inhabitants of the adjacent streets, and posted his satellites around the neighbourhood to keep it free from intrusion. Twelve thousand of the richest inhabitants were dispossessed of their estates to make room for his designs, and upon the creatures of his disgraceful bounty he bestowed the spoils of his plunder. The new palace was to all intents an impregnable fortress; yet such were the secret horrors engendered by his course of villanies, that Ivan, thinking that it was not sufficiently secure, retired again to Alexandrovsky, which expanded from an humble village into a considerable town. It contained a celebrated church of our Lady, which was painted on the outside with the most gaudy colours, every brick containing the representation of a cross. Here the czar possessed a large palace surrounded by a ditch and ramparts: his civil and military functionaries had separate houses; and the legionaries and tradespeople had distinct streets. One of the rules imposed by the tyrant was that no person should enter or leave the town without his express permission, and a patrol constantly occupied the neighbourhood to observe that this order was fulfilled. A new notion now possessed him. Buried in the forlorn solitudes of the deep forests,

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On other occasions they were drowned, as the royalists were at Nantes by the company of Marat. A number of denounced persons were placed on a frozen river, then the ice was cut round them, and the wretched sufferers fell in, and perished in the water. The Strelitz afterwards grew so formidable, that the plots into which they entered threatened the imperial safety; and Peter the Great finally suppressed them. In our own times, similar instances of reform have taken place in Constantinople and Madagascar. We find that the authorities differ as to the formation of this band of Ivan's; some asserting that the Opritshnina, or Select Legion, was a different body from that which was subsequently known as the Strelitz; but we are content to rely upon the evidences which induce us to believe that they were the same.

he converted his palace into a monastery, assumed the style and title of abbot, turned his favourites into monks, and called his body of select and depraved legionaries by the name of the Brothers. He provided them all with black vestments, under which they wore splendid habits, embroidered with gold and fur; and he instituted a code of practice as austere as it was inconsistent. At three o'clock in the morning, the matin service began, which lasted until seven; at eight mass commenced again; and at ten the whole body, except Ivan, who stood reading aloud from some religious book, sat down to a sumptuous repast. The remnants of the table were afterwards distributed amongst the poor — for throughout the whole of Ivan's actions there was always an evident desire to win the favour of the multitude; the czar dined after the rest, and then descended to the dungeons to witness the infliction of tortures upon some of his victims, which gave him extraordinary delight. At eight o'clock vespers were read; and at ten Ivan retired to his chamber, where he was lulled to sleep by three blind men. To diversify this monotonous life, he sometimes visited the monasteries, or hunted wild beasts in the woods; but he was constantly employed in issuing his instructions upon public business, and even during prayers often gave his most cruel and sanguinary orders. Such was the life of the tyrant in his gloomy seclusion at Alexandrovsky.

During this period, the select legion increased in number to 6000 men, embracing in their body all the abandoned and infamous wretches who could be procured for hire. As types of their office, they were ordered to suspend from the saddle-bow a dog's head and a broom,—the former to signify that they worried the enemies of the czar, and the latter to indicate that they swept them off the face of the earth. They went from street to street armed with long daggers and hatchets in search of victims, who amounted daily to a score. They soon became the objects of fear and execration. The first victims were the prince Schuisky

and his son. At the place of execution, the younger offered himself first to the axe; but the feelings of nature were so strong in the heart of the parent, that he could not endure to witness the death of his son, and he insisted on receiving his death first. When his head rolled off, his son embraced it in a passion of tears; and while the lips of the living yet clung to the quivering and agonised features of the dead, the executioner's axe descended upon the son's neck. On the same day four other princes were beheaded, and a fifth impaled. Several boyards were exiled, others forced to embrace the monastic vows, and a still greater number were beggared by confiscation. These horrors increased every day. The streets and squares were filled with dead bodies; and such was the universal terror, that the survivors did not dare to appear to give the rites of burial to the dead. It would appear that the murder of individuals ceased at length to satisfy the insatiate appetite of the monster: he longed for massacre on a more extended scale; his eyes grew tired of the slow process of execution in detail. Accordingly he sought for excuses to lay whole towns in blood. A few of the inhabitants of Torjek happening one day to quarrel with some of the legionaries, Ivan declared them all to be rebels, and instantly caused them *en masse* to be either tortured to death or drowned. The inhabitants of Kolomua were similarly disposed of, merely because they were the dependents of a nobleman who had outgrown his favour. He spared neither sex nor age. Many ladies were exposed in the streets, and then shot in the public sight.*

These atrocities, unparalleled in the annals of the world, form but the prelude to the enormous crimes of this infamous prince. His march of devastation to Novgorod may be considered as the grand act of his career of blood. The provocation which led to the

* Ivan sometimes used to force the wife of an obnoxious boyard to stand in an indelicate position in the public streets until he and his train passed out of sight.

sanguinary punishment of that city was a falsehood invented by a profligate fellow who wanted to escape justice, and to take revenge upon the authorities, who had found him guilty of the commission of some offences. This criminal, knowing that Ivan rewarded all those who came before him with charges of disaffection, wrote a letter in the name of the archbishop and inhabitants of Novgorod to the king of Poland, offering to put the city under that monarch's protection. This letter he carefully concealed behind an image of the Virgin in the church of St. Sophia, and then laid before the czar at Moscow a private revelation of the conspiracy which he had himself invented. Ivan despatched a trusty messenger to Novgorod, who discovered the letter in the spot to which the informer had referred, and, upon this evidence, the city was denounced to the vengeance of the select legion. But as it was likely that the sight of this dreadful deed would be more exciting than any he had hitherto witnessed, Ivan put himself at the head of his guards, and in December 1569, accompanied by his son, departed from Alexandrovsky on his mission of destruction.

On his way he passed through the town of Klin, and exterminated the whole of the population. When he arrived at the city of Twer, he took up his quarters at a monastery outside the gates, and sent his soldiers into the city to massacre and plunder the inhabitants at will. The horrors of the scene reminded the unfortunate people of the terrible cruelties inflicted upon their ancestors by the khan Usbek in 1327. At some of the feats of death, Ivan himself assisted: and his confidential minister Skuratof secretly entered the cell of a monastery where the virtuous and deposed metropolitan was confined, and strangled him.

Proceeding onwards from Twer, Ivan depopulated all the towns on his route to the banks of the Ilmen: and on the 2d of January his advanced guard entered the devoted and miserable city of Novgorod. The preparations made upon this occasion to ensure the

complete carnage meditated by the tyrant, are memorable proofs of the coolness with which the demons of the Opritshnina executed the will of their savage leader. They ordered the churches and convents to be closed, and demanded a temporary levy from the monks of twenty roubles per head; and such unfortunate ecclesiastics as were unable to comply with this exorbitant exaction were deliberately flogged from morning till night. The houses of the inhabitants were placed under seizure, and guarded at the entrances, and the owners thrown into chains. This was merely preliminary to the arrival of the monarch.

In four days afterwards Ivan and the remainder arrived, and rested within two versts of the city. On the following morning all the monks who had failed to pay the redemption tax were taken out, beaten to death with clubs, and their bodies sent to their respective monasteries for interment. On the next day, accompanied as before by his son, Ivan made his solemn entrance at the head of his troops into the city. The archbishop, with the clergy, carrying the miraculous images, met him on the bridge, and attempted to utter the accustomed benediction: but Ivan, interrupting the ceremony, addressed them in a long harangue, which consisted of an elaborate curse against their order. Having satisfied his rage by the delivery of this anathema, he ordered the crucifix and images to be borne into the church of St. Sophia, where he heard mass, praying with great fervour, and then retired to the episcopal palace, where he sat down to dinner surrounded by his boyards. Suddenly, in the midst of the feast, he started up and raised a terrible cry. The signal was scarcely given when his satellites, as if by magic, appeared in a body before him, and seized the archbishop, and the officers and servants. The palace and the cloisters were then given up to plunder. The czar's confessor, assisted in the sacrilege by the master of the ceremonies, burst into the cathedral and carried off its sacred treasures, the rich vestments, the images, and the

bells. The churches and monasteries were all pillaged, and not a fragment of the precious accumulations of the temples and religious houses escaped the impious hands of the spoliators.

Next came the massacre of the inhabitants, which was conducted with the utmost patience and regularity. Every day from 500 to 1000 Novgorodians were brought before Ivan and his son, and immediately put to death either by torture or fire. Some were tied to sledges and dragged into the Volkhof; others flung over the bridge into the river — wives with their husbands, mothers with their tender infants; while soldiers armed with long sharp spears sailed on the water to pierce and hew those who attempted to escape by swimming. When the massacre had continued in this way for five weeks, Ivan drew off and visited the neighbouring monasteries, which he pillaged indiscriminately, levelling houses, destroying cattle, and burning the corn. He then returned to Novgorod, and inspected in person the remaining work of destruction. He passed through the streets while his myrmidons plundered the shops and houses, which were entered by the doors or windows indifferently: rich silks and furs were divided by the brutal soldiery, and all unavailable goods, such as hemp and wax and tallow, were either burnt or cast into the river. Detachments were then sent into the adjacent domains to plunder and murder without any respect of persons.

Having exhausted all his arts of ruin, Ivan now relaxed, and issued a general pardon to the few wretched persons who survived, and to whom death would have been an act of mercy. He summoned them to appear before him; and a ghastly assemblage of skeletons, motionless and in despair, stood in the presence of the murderer like ghosts invoked from the grave. Untouched by the appalling sight, he addressed them in the mildest language, desired to have their prayers that he might have a long and happy reign, and took his leave of them in the most gracious words. The miserable

inhabitants were smote with delirium; they looked around them in vain for the friends that had been sacrificed, for the houses and the wealth that had been laid waste. Sixty thousand victims were stretched dead in the streets of the once proud and opulent republic: and to complete its melancholy doom, pestilence and a famine succeeded, sweeping off nearly all those who had survived the extermination of the less merciful czar. The city was now entirely depopulated, and presented the sepulchral aspect of a vast cemetery.

The monster passed on to the city of Pskof, where, however, he consented to forego his terrible schemes of destruction, satisfying himself with plundering the principal inhabitants. He then returned home to Moscow, loaded with plunder, and carrying in his train the archbishop of Novgorod, and other distinguished victims, whom he reserved for a public execution.

He had no sooner arrived in Moscow than he caused several of his favourites to be arrested on the ground of suspicion, but really in order to increase the number of the wretches he designed to put to death; and thus, naming a day for a general execution of the whole, extensive preparations were made in the market place to carry his inhuman project into execution. Eighteen gibbets were erected, numberless instruments of torture were exhibited, and a great fire was made in the centre, over which a huge copper caldron was suspended. The inhabitants, seeing these dreadful preliminaries, believed that the czar's object was to set the city on fire, and consign the people to death; and, flying from the spot in despair, they abandoned their shops and merchandise, leaving their property to the mercy of the select legion. In a few hours Moscow was utterly deserted, and not a living person was to be seen but a troop of the Opritshnina ranged in gloomy silence round the gibbets and blazing fire. Presently the beating of drums rose upon the air, and the czar was seen advancing on horseback, accompanied by his favourite son, and followed by his devoted guards. In the rear came the spectral troop of victims,

in number about 300, wan and bloody, and hardly able to crawl upon the ground. On perceiving that the theatre of the carnage was destitute of an audience, Ivan commanded his soldiers to collect the inhabitants; and, after a short pause, finding that they did not arrive with promptitude, he went in person to demand their presence at the treat he had prepared for them, assuring them at the same time of the good-will he entertained towards them. The wretched Muscovites dared not disobey him, and hurrying in terror from their hiding places, they crowded to the scene of execution, which was speedily filled with spectators even to the roofs of the houses. Then the dreadful rites began. The czar addressed the people with exclamations upon the righteousness of the punishments he was about to inflict, and the people, oppressed with horror, replied in terms of approbation. A crowd of 120 victims, who were declared to be less guilty than the rest, were first separated from the others and pardoned. The condemned were called one by one, and some, after hearing the accusation in general terms from the lips of the czar, accompanied by occasional blows on the head from a whip which he held in his hand, were given over to the assassins, who hung them up by the feet, and then cut to pieces, or plunged them half alive into the boiling caldron. These executions, which are too horrible to be related in detail, lasted for about four hours; during which time nearly 200 victims, innocent of the crimes with which they were charged, suffered deaths of the most exquisite and prolonged agony.

A despotism so sanguinary and so wanton was well calculated to endanger the safety of those institutions which the wisdom of others had established. Russia, distracted through all her provinces by the atrocities of Ivan, soon became a prey to those unwearied foes who never lost an opportunity of taking advantage of her domestic difficulties. The declaration of Ivan's supremacy to his unfortunate subjects was, "I am your god as God is mine; whose throne is surrounded by

archangels, as is the throne of God." But this piece of blasphemy, which had the effect of making the Russians tremble, only increased the determination of his external enemies. Sweden had already wrested Esthonia from him; Kettler, the last grand-master of the Livonian knights, satisfied himself with Courland and Semigallia; while Battori of Poland, the successor of Sigismund Augustus, deprived him of Livonia, one of the most important points in his dominions. In 1566, Ivan laid before an assembly of the states-general, consisting of a convocation of ecclesiastics, nobles, citizens, and traders, a statement of his negotiations with Poland on the subject of Livonia; but as his real object was to assert his tyrannical power rather than to gain the political advantages he pointed out, the issue of the assembly was merely an admission from all the parties present that the will of the czar was indisputable, and that they had no right even to tender him their advice. The great advantage of recovering Livonia from Poland was obviously to secure it as an outlet upon the Baltic for Russian commerce, and as a means of opening a communication with Europe. To the ministry of Sylvester and Adascheff belongs the credit of this admirable project; but a design which they would have accomplished with comparative facility, was suffered by Ivan to be wasted in fruitless contentions.

Battori terrified Ivan in the midst of his tyrannies; and the monster who could visit his people with such a example of cruelties, crouched before the king of Poland. His fear of Battori carried him to extremes. He not only supplicated terms at his hands, but suffered him to offer personal insults to the officers who represented the czar as his court. The grovelling measures and cowardice of Ivan disgusted his adversary; and in reply to some fresh instance of dastardly submission, Battori charged him with the grossest crimes — with having falsified the articles of treaties, and applied inhuman tortures to his people. The letter containing these strong, but just, animadversions, closed with a challenge to single

combat, which the poverty of the czar's spirit met by renewed protestations of the most abject character.

At length, urged by the clamour of his advisers, Ivan organised an army of 300,000 men ; but, although he could instigate and assist at the most revolting punishments, he shrunk from a personal share in the numerous petty conflicts which took place between his forces and the Livonian knights. Instead of advancing boldly upon the enemy, who could not have maintained war against the superior numbers of the Russians, he suffered himself to be shielded by a jesuit, the pope's envoy, whose intercession with Battori he had procured by representing, with consummate audacity, that he hoped to be able to effect the conversion of the Russians to catholicism. Whenever he fell in with the Livonians, and the collision terminated in victory, he committed the wildest excesses: plundered the captives of their wealth, which he transmitted to his own private coffers, and then sentenced the prisoners to be flung into boiling caldrons, spitted on lances, or roasted at fires, which he amused himself by stirring while the sacrificial murders were in progress. Wars so irregularly conducted, and terminating in such frightful revenge, could not but entail calamities upon the empire. All that was gained by the long struggle for Livonia, was the occasional plunder which Ivan appropriated to himself.

To support the system of profligate expenditure to which the whole life of this extraordinary man inevitably led, he laid on the most exorbitant taxes, and lent himself to the most unjust monopolies. Nor was he satisfied with exceeding in this way the most arbitrary examples that had preceded him ; but, with a recklessness of human life, and a disregard of the common decencies and obligations of the worst condition of society, he proceeded to rifle his subjects of their private means, sometimes upon slight pretences, but oftener without any pretence whatever. It would almost appear that his appetite for sights of destruction had palled with ordinary gratification ; and that he had

jaded his invention to discover new modes of cruelty. Having exhausted in all its varieties the mere art of slaughter, he proceeded to make his objects violate before his eyes the sacred feelings of nature. He demanded fratricide and parricide at their hands: one man was forced to kill his father, another his brother: eight hundred women were drowned, and, bursting into the houses of his victims, he compelled the survivors to point out the places where the remnant of their wealth was concealed. His excesses carried him beyond all law, human and divine. He assumed the place, and even usurped the attributes of the Deity, and identified himself to a proverb with the Creator. Not content with indulging his insane passions in the frenzy of an undisciplined mind, he trampled the usages of Russia under foot, and married seven wives — which was held by the tenets of the Greek religion to be a crime of great magnitude.

In the midst of these horrors, Ivan did not fail to pursue both his devotions and his amusements. Assuming the authority of a god, he did not forget the external forms by which divinity is reverenced, and his palace presented an alternate round of prayers and carousals. His chief pastimes were in keeping with the natural ferocity of his character. Bears were procured from Novgorod for his amusement, and his greatest pleasure was to watch from his windows when a group of citizens were collected in the streets, and let slip two or three of the hungry and irritated animals amongst them. The flight of the terrified Muscovites, and the cries of the victims, excited bursts of loud and long-continued laughter. It is said that he used to send a small piece of gold to those who happened to be injured for life in these perilous freaks, by way, perhaps, of insulting their agonies. Another of his entertainments consisted in the company of jesters, whose especial business it was to divert him, particularly before and after the executions. The jesters, however, frequently suffered dearly for bad jokes. One of the most distinguished of the

court mimics was the prince Goosdef. On one occasion Ivan, being disappointed in a joke, poured the boiling contents of a soup basin over the prince's head. The unfortunate joker, in the pains of the moment, attempted to retreat from the table, but the tyrant struck him in a vital part with a knife, and he fell senseless to the ground. A physician was immediately sent for. "Preserve my faithful servant," cried the czar, "I have jested a little too hard with him!" "So hard," replied the physician, "that only God and your majesty can restore him to life: he breathes no more." Ivan looked contemptuously at the dead body, called the prince a dog, and returned to his amusements. At another time he was visited by a boyard, who bowed reverentially to the ground, as was customary. "God save thee, my dear Boris," exclaimed the monster, "thou deservest a proof of my favour;" and he snatched up a knife, and cut off one of the boyard's ears. The wretch, without exhibiting the least sign of the agony he endured, thanked the czar for his gracious favour, and wished him a happy reign. This is an instance in a multitude of his mode of impressing upon the minds of the Russians a sense of his supremacy; he desired them to believe that even blows and injuries at his hands were, like heavenly punishments, to be received with submission and gratitude. Never was the doctrine of passive obedience carried to such extremity. The Russians described themselves as sheep, who considered it impious to resist when their shepherd gave them up to the butcher.

But the measure of his iniquities was not yet full. Not satisfied with the immolation of thousands, with seven wives, and an attempt to gain the English Elizabeth *, whose hand he sought, and in whose dominions

* A letter from Ivan to Elizabeth, in which he solicits a promise that she will grant him an asylum, should his ungrateful subjects render it necessary for him to retire from Russia, is still extant. Ivan was interested in the character of the English people, by an accidental acquaintance he formed with some English gentlemen, who were travelling through Russia for their amusement. He received them with kindness and hospitality, and expressed himself much pleased with the account they gave him of

in the terrors of his conscience he begged for an asylum, a still greater guilt remained behind. The young prince, his eldest and favourite son, who had accompanied him through the worst scenes of his desolating career, presented himself one day before him with a request to be entrusted with the command of a few troops, that he might hasten to the assistance of Pskof, which was then placed in a state of siege by the Poles. Ivan, always afraid of embarking in a war, imagined that he saw in this proposal the germ of an insurrection against his government. "Rebel," he exclaimed, "you are leagued with the boyards in a conspiracy to dethrone me." As he spoke he raised his arm, and smote his son with an iron rod. He inflicted several deep wounds upon him, and, at last, by a violent blow on his head, he stretched the unfortunate prince, weltering in his blood, on the ground. Instant contrition, however, appears to have seized upon him. The enormity of his crime was visible in a moment, and passion gave way to horror and despair. Pale and trembling, he flung himself upon the body of the murdered youth, and with inarticulate appeals to Heaven and the slain, endeavoured to recall the life that he had extinguished. But the divine justice was complete. The dying czarovitch clasped the hand of his father, and in tears of tenderness and pity besought of him to be patient. "I die," he cried, "an obedient son and faithful subject." In four days afterwards he expired in the gloomy retirement of Alexandrovsky.

This event — so horrible and retributory — seemed

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their native country. Lieutenant Holman, the blind traveller, whose extraordinary vigour of mind and indomitable perseverance appear to have compensated him for the loss of his sight, informs us, in his Travels in Russia, that there are preserved, in the College of Foreign Affairs, "a variety of letters and treaties between Elizabeth of England and the czar Ivan Vasilo-vitch, relative to the commercial relations of the two countries, as well as on other subjects; and amongst the more interesting, was one in which Elizabeth, in reply to a request to that effect, promises the Russian monarch an asylum in her kingdom, with every due honour, in the event of a revolution in his empire; and another, in which he begs of her to send him a doctor; the result of which was, that Dr. Robert Jacobs was appointed to that office." — Vol. i. p. 230.

at last to reach the heart of the tyrant. It struck him down in the full tide of his atrocities. The wretch who had committed so many blasphemies against the moral justice of God, was now a terrible example of the power of conscience. He abandoned himself to the visions of a disturbed imagination. He often arose at midnight, filled the air with his cries, and only gave way again to repose when nature was exhausted. So fearful was his alarm, that he resolved to fly from Moscow and bury himself in a monastery: but his subjects, fascinated by the very cruelties that appalled them, unanimously entreated him not to desert them.

The close of his life, however, was now near at hand. In 1580 he perceptibly declined, and in March he was seized with a dangerous illness. Some astrologers predicted his approaching end; but a threat to roast them alive stifled the superstitious prophecy. By a strange and unaccountable perversity of nature, the profligate tyrant, who had enacted such tragedies during his own reign, appeared disposed on his death-bed to make some atonement in his regulations for the future government of the empire. He appointed experienced counsellors to watch the minority of his son Feodor, ordered the liberation of all prisoners who were not charged with capital offences, and recommended a reduction of the enormous taxes with which he had oppressed his subjects. But this was merely a gleam of the expiring pangs of conscience: his original character only slept for an interval. He insisted during his illness on being carried to the chamber that contained his treasures, that he might gloat upon the sight of his acquisitions. It is related of him, that upon this occasion he expatiated learnedly to an English gentleman who accompanied him upon the various characteristics of diamonds and precious stones, pointing out the marks by which they might be distinguished, and their relative value estimated. But even this instance of the clinging vices of his disposition was not the worst. Two days before his death, his daughter-in-law entered his chamber to at-

tend his bedside, but she was obliged to fly from the monster: her honour was not safe, although the libertine was expiring. History — whose province it is to penetrate truth in its worst shapes — is compelled to veil an act so impious and revolting.

His strength now hourly declined. In the delirium of his fever, his senses became bewildered. He constantly called aloud on his murdered son, with whom he sometimes appeared to converse in accents of tenderness. On the 17th of the month he seemed to be revived by a warm bath. On the following day, which, according to the prediction, was to be his last, he ordered the astrologers to be put to death; but they replied, "Wait, the day is not yet over." A second bath was prepared, and he remained in it for three hours. He then went to bed, and slept. Shortly, however, he arose, and desired one of his attendants to get the chess-board: but while he sat upon the bed, in the attitude of arranging the pieces, a sudden pang seized him, and he fell backward, and in that position expired.

Thus died the most extraordinary monarch that the world has ever seen, — a man who combined in his spirit more of the attributes of the infernal nature than of humanity, and whose atrocities exceed the most extravagant actions of the most cruel tyrants in ancient or modern times. The wisdom and moderation of the early years of his reign render the dark crimes of the rest the more memorable; and, in dwelling upon the magnitude of his guilt, the imagination can hardly compass its extent, its motives, or its end. He resembled, in every act of his unbridled career, some incarnate demon who was let loose, like a plague, amongst men, to ravage and destroy: there was no touch of remorse or reason in him: he was as a consuming fire, irresistible and indiscriminate; and wherever his course swept him, he carried dismay and ruin in his progress. It is surprising that it should fall to the lot of Ivan to be recorded as the monarch who introduced the art of printing into Russia; and that a prince who brought

more calamity upon the country by the fierceness of his passions, and the unrelenting and sanguinary despotism of his measures, than the aggregate of all the princes who preceded him, should have been the active promoter of civilisation during thirteen years of his life. The arts that were cultivated in Italy, and the luxuries of Grecian splendour, were rendered familiar to the people by this consummate tyrant; but the brilliant hopes of his opening years were disappointed and frustrated by the horrors he enacted throughout the remainder of his reign. Other tyrants were merely cold-hearted, ambitious, unjust, and cruel: but Ivan was all that other tyrants were, and a great deal more than other tyrants could have conceived. His sensualities were not confined to the walls of his palace, but were carried abroad into the open streets, which he defiled with indecencies; and into the houses of his subjects, where he offered up the household gods to his impious passions. Neither age nor sex were secured from the rage of his unearthly wickedness: innocence had no shield, courage no rescue, fidelity no claim: carnage, violation, hypocrisy, and brutal lust were ascendant above all natural, social, and legal obligations. His victims were greater in number than those of Caligula and Nero; his crimes more numerous, diversified, and appalling; his influence was more complete over the minds of his subjects: and yet this fiend, who so far excelled the monsters of antiquity, was permitted, unlike them, to die a natural death. It is not surprising that he is distinguished in the annals of Russia by the significant appellation of Ivan the Terrible.)

The influence of the character and actions of Ivan upon the political condition of Russia was sufficiently disastrous. Yet by some strange anomaly in the social system, the integrity of the empire was preserved nearly whole to his successor, while its bounds were actually increased by the acquisition of Siberia, which, however, was conquered for the czar by a handful of marauding Cossacks. Although the administration of the govern-

ment under a prince so abandoned to the most pernicious and ruinous courses could hardly be said to be directed by any fixed principles, yet we recognise some intermittent struggles, even in the darkness of his despotism, to introduce casual improvements into the country. Thus, after the destruction of Novgorod, which was the mart of commerce for the whole of the north of Russia, and the chief point of communication with the Hanseatic cities, Ivan applied to Charles V. for his permission to allow a selection of German literati, artists, and mechanics to pass into Russia, for the purpose of enlarging the knowledge and improving the usages of his people. Charles readily granted the request; but the inhabitants of Lubeck, jealous of this advance of civilisation and skill, which they were afraid would ultimately affect their commercial transactions with Russia, by enabling the Russians to embark in domestic manufactures, arrested the Germans on their way; while the merchants of Reval and Riga, instigated by similar motives, united in a remonstrance to the German emperor against a proceeding which appeared to militate so strongly to the prejudice of their trade. Thus were the liberal designs of Ivan resisted; a resistance which was afterwards rewarded in Livonia by a succession of massacres.

If, however, a few slight attempts at distant intervals to increase the happiness of his people can be traced in the reign of Ivan, a great amount of evil is also compressed within its compass. The popular doctrine which affirms the danger of committing the power of working such extensive mischiefs to the hands of one man, finds an illustration in the history of Ivan the Terrible, which, if instances were admitted in proof of principles, would be conclusive of its truth. During his life, Russia was twice invaded with success by the Tartars; and Moscow — the proud and imperial Moscow — was once laid in ashes. The tyrant, quailing under the phantasies of his conscience, fled in terror before every enemy that crossed the frontier lines, and

even when, by the accidents of a contest, he chanced to procure a victory, the results of the achievement were as unfortunate as if the banners of the invader had swept the soil in triumph. His presence was always followed by devastation. The many enemies of Russia, taking advantage of the dismay which the czar spread around him, constantly harassed the already enfeebled people; so that, whether the Teutonic knights, the Poles, the Swedes, or the Tartars made incursions into the provinces, they were certain to gain more or less by the adventure, while the Russians were equally certain to lose. Thus exposed to attacks from without, and depressed by calamities within, Ivan the Terrible, after a reign of thirty-four years, bequeathed the empire to his son Feodor, a person whose mental and bodily infirmities were such that he was consigned to the guardianship of three of the chief members of the council, who were selected and appointed by his father on his death-bed.

CHAP. XIV.

ACCESSION OF FEODOR. — BORIS GODUNOF CAUSES THE PRINCE DMITRI TO BE MURDERED. — REDUCTION OF THE LIBERTIES OF THE PEASANTRY. — DEATH OF FEODOR, AND EXTINCTION OF THE LINE OF RURIK. — BORIS IS PLACED ON THE THRONE. — HISTORICAL RETROSPECT. — DESPOTIC MEASURES OF BORIS. — AN IMPOSTOR ASSUMES THE NAME OF DMITRI, AND CLAIMS THE SCEPTRE. — BORIS COMMITS SUICIDE, AND THE FALSE DMITRI IS CROWNED. — HE RAPIDLY LOSES HIS POPULARITY. — THE PEOPLE RISE AGAINST THE POLES AND MURDER DMITRI — SCHNISKY IS ELECTED CZAR. — NEW DMITRIS APPEAR. — THE POLES SEIZE UPON MOSCOW. — SCHNISKY RESIGNS. — AN INTERREGNUM ENSUES. — THE DESIGNS OF SIGISMUND ON THE THRONE ARE DEFEATED BY THE CLERGY, AND THE POLES ARE DRIVEN OUT OF RUSSIA.

The great internal struggle throughout the reign of Ivan the Terrible was directed to the subjugation of the nobility. He felt that so long as any remnant of political power remained in their hands, his own authority must continue to suffer some restriction; and, resolved to obtain a supreme and irresponsible ascendancy, he left no means untried to subdue and crush the aristocracy. We have seen by what measures the old families were thus enfeebled, leaving in the issue a wide and vacant space between the nobles and the throne. The gradations by which the subject ascended to the councils of the state were broken away, and the autocrat sat alone on his solitary height. The interval that separated the throne from the people, presented a field for the occupation of any ambitious minister who united to the powers adequate to the achievement of usurpation, sufficient personal influence to embark in the design.

Feodor, the successor of Ivan, was a prince of feeble mind, degenerate in body as well as intellect, and wholly unfit for the cares of government. It is related of him, that in his youth his chief amusement was to hide himself for hours in the belfries of the churches, striking

the bells; a silly species of entertainment, which his father had often reproved in vain. To this prince, who was consigned to the guardianship of three members of the council, the throne of Russia, under circumstances of peculiar difficulty, devolved.

The choice of guardians was a subject of some delicacy to the Russian nobles, who, after so long a night of suppression, began to perceive, in the imbecility of the new prince, a prospect of the means by which they might recover their former privileges. Every measure of the administrators was reviewed by them with jealousy; and loud murmurs filled the avenues of the court. In this crisis a bold and cunning man, taking advantage of the mutual discontents of the people and the nobility, laid the foundations of a deep and subtle plan for getting the reins of government into his own hands. This man was Boris Godunof, the descendant of a Tartar, and whose sister, under the sanction of an eastern custom, which permitted princes to form alliances with their subjects, was married to Feodor. By the exercise of some artfulness, and an external show of tenderness for Feodor, Boris succeeded in acquiring considerable influence over him, and at length became so completely his master in all things, that he might be said to have ruled Russia in his name. The favour lavished by the impotent Feodor upon his brother-in-law was productive by careful management of a large fortune to Boris, who, knowing the power of wealth amongst a debased people, omitted no opportunity of increasing his pecuniary resources. His income, before he ventured to act with decision in the promotion of his grand object, amounted to a sum equal to 30,000*l.* a year, which at that period was a magnificent fortune. With means so princely he was soon able to secure a band of active partizans, and to enlist in his cause a number of the poorer nobility, whose names and voices were valuable to him, although in all other respects they were destitute of influence. The great political power, too, which he wielded in the councils of the state, being actually,

although not nominally, czar, enabled him to remove by imprisonment, exile, or death, all those persons who were likely to prove impediments to the prosecution of his objects.

But there was one difficulty in his way, which was not so easily conquered by the ordinary alternatives to which the princes of Russia were accustomed to have recourse. Feodor had a younger brother, Dmitri, a child, who was looked upon — Feodor not possessing issue — as the heir in the right line of Rurik. The people were so attached to the ancient dynasty, that Boris was well persuaded that so long as Dmitri lived it would have been impossible to make an attempt upon the throne, without risking a convulsion in which his own life would ultimately pay the forfeit. He accordingly turned his attention to the best means of ridding himself of so formidable an obstacle. In pursuance of this purpose, he sent the young prince Dmitri, and his mother, who was much attached to the boy, to the distant and obscure town of Uglitch, on some insignificant pretence; but they had not been long established in their remote residence when he caused Dmitri to be murdered in the court-yard of the house where he was kept, while he was at play with his female attendant. This murder was executed with some adroitness, but it was a matter which could not be entirely concealed; and, although Boris caused a report to be spread abroad that the young prince had died of fever, and Feodor rested satisfied with the statement, yet there were many persons to whom the whole affair and its motives were thoroughly known. Boris, apprehending that the people of Uglitch might circulate their suspicions as to the manner of the prince's death, determined to prevent the possibility of an unlucky disclosure, and, without waiting for any plausible pretext, he laid the city in ashes. This summary method of disposing of an inconvenient witness had been so often practised with success, that the audacious usurper believed himself to be secure in trying the experiment on this occasion. The

man who had actually murdered the prince was, of course, sentenced to immediate execution by his guilty employer; and Dmitri's mother, lest the maternal feelings, by some powerful instinct of nature, should lead to detection, was consigned to the retirement of a convent.

There was now no impediment in his way but Feodor, whose life was for some little time useful to him in the prosecution of his plans. He could not hope to carry his purposes at one stroke; and, having removed the distant but most dangerous obstacle in his path, by making away with Dmitri, his next object was to entrench himself firmly in the government before he openly avowed his ulterior aim. In order to effect this the more securely he purchased from a Greek bishop, who still possessed the nominal authority in religious affairs, the privilege of appointing a Russian patriarch of his own choosing; a prelate upon whose servile aid he calculated in the future promotion of his scheme. The nobles had abundant grounds for suspicion in these unusual proceedings, and some of them were bold enough to express their doubts of the purity of Boris's motives; but the most prominent amongst them were speedily removed, or compelled to fly from a territory which the machinations of Boris rendered unsafe. The inferior order of the nobility—those who claimed no distinctions of ancestral honour, and who had risen by the force of circumstances to their elevation—were propitiated by an act of consummate policy, which had also the effect of abolishing an anomaly that had hitherto existed in the condition of the Russian peasantry. The tenure under which the population of the plains held their rights, implied a species of wild liberty, elevated by one degree above that of the serfs of the feudal system. The freedom of the Russians was evidenced rather by the absence of a positive bond upon their free will, than by the presence of any active principle of individual right. The Russian was empowered to hire himself to another as a servant, or to barter his freedom for life or a term

of years, which privilege testified the existence of a previous state of liberty; but beyond that right, which was tolerated because there had not occurred a sufficient reason for its restriction or extinction, the wretched and ignorant peasant possessed none of those immunities which mark and distinguish the condition of a freeman. The separation of the people by vast distances, and the thin occupation of the land, amounted in reality to dispersion. That dispersion prevented the possibility of constant communication and co-operation, and thus the safety valve of liberty, public opinion, was nowhere to be found; so that the peasants were virtually slaves, while they enjoyed a certain vague and undefined right of a personal kind, which amounted to nothing more than the unprofitable negation of servitude. It had been the policy of the grand princes to weaken the local and political power of the princes of the appanages, and their tenantry were thus left unfettered by law, with a view to keep the influence of the lords of the soil in check. The serf's privilege of moving from place to place diminished the authority and personal influence of the chief of the province; who, if the serf had been bound to the circle of his jurisdiction, would have been enabled to exercise a greater influence in public affairs. The autocracy of the grand prince had, in fact, preserved to the peasantry their miserable privileges. Boris Godunof, however, perceiving in this unsettled and undefined right a good excuse for reducing the people to a better state of organisation, and at the same time of bribing the small nobles to attach themselves to his administration, made a law to bind the serf to the soil. He was so much perplexed and embarrassed by the few great families that remained, that he saw no escape from his difficulties except in some measure that should win over the suffrages of the inferior, but more numerous class of the nobility. There was also a sound political argument in favour of adopting a principle which appeared to be so severe in its application: the peasants of the major part of Russia were constantly in the habit

of emigrating to the south, attracted by the mildness of the climate, and the comparative liberty that prevailed in that part of Russia; and the new law not only proscribed such a practice, but rendered the people irremovable from the domains in which they were located.

Nor was this able and ingenious movement the only adulation which Boris offered up to the influential classes. He adopted a variety of means to render himself popular with the inhabitants of cities, who, placed in consolidated bodies in the midst of great plains, exercised a considerable power in virtue of position, and superior wealth and intelligence. He protected commerce, and enlarged its bounds. Smolensk was fortified by impregnable barriers; and the Tartars, whose insolent courage frequently brought them within the reach of his arms, were chased back into their deserts, and kept there by strong military posts established in their immediate neighbourhoods. Fortresses were erected at the foot of the Caucasian range; and Russian civilisation, such as it was, was introduced into Siberia. His genius, fertile in the arts of popularity, suggested to him the advantages of opening a diplomatic intercourse with the European powers, which he did with effect. The Swedes, falling under his sword, were driven into Narva; and even Lithuania and Poland, hitherto implacable and unpurchaseable, yielded without reluctance to the growing power of his sceptre. In the midst of these successes and intrigues, he did not disdain to court the good opinion of the lowest class of the Russians, by extending a royal indulgence to all the criminals confined in the gaols.

When these preliminary designs were completed, and the patriarch of the church, the creature of his breath, was firmly seated, Feodor died. The coincidence of his death, at the very juncture when Boris was best prepared to profit by it, has given a reasonable colouring to the suspicion that the minister made away with his life. The better, probably, to release himself from all suspicion of having been concerned in the event, Boris,

taking his sister, the widow of Feodor, along with him, retired to a monastery, affecting to be deeply grieved by the decease of the last living lineal descendant of Rurik, and expressing his determination to lead for the future a life of monastic seclusion. But his plot was deeply laid. The race of Rurik was now terminated: the line of succession was broken, and it remained for the people to elect a czar of their own choice. In this emergency the people looked up to the nobles, the nobles to the grandees, and the grandees to the patriarch, who was an instrument in the hands of Boris Godunof.

It happened that the patriarch, treading in the steps of his master, had acquired considerable influence over the people; and when this power came to be united to the extraordinary popularity of Godunof, there was not much likelihood that any opposition would be offered to his nomination. Besides, a number of the nobility were personal adherents of the minister, and resolved to support him; and the few who dared to form opinions for themselves in contradiction to the mass, were afraid to avow themselves. The result was decisive. The election was held in the house of the patriarch; every eye was on the prelate, and every ear listened to hear the name he should propose. They were not long kept in suspense; he named Boris as the wisest and most just man in the empire, and the proposition was received with clamorous shouts of applause, which were echoed abroad by mercenary agents.

Boris, however, on being informed of this decision, affected a determination to refuse his assent. He declared that he had resolved to live and die in a monastery; and, thanking the people for so distinguished a mark of their favour, begged with humility to decline its acceptance. This was of course a mere stratagem to obtain a still more urgent requisition, in order that it might afterwards be made to appear that he yielded to the public good, and not to personal ambition. The crafty patriarch took advantage of the opportunity, by procuring an unanimous declaration of their attachment

and their wishes from the populace; and then, at the head of some of the principal men of the state, followed by crowds of the commonalty, with a train of monks carrying the cross and a multitude of saintly relics, he presented himself at the monastery where Boris had taken up his residence, and again solicited him not to refuse the prayer of his devoted fellow-countrymen. Boris, with well-dissembled reluctance, pretended to be subdued by so solemn a claim upon his patriotism; and yielding slowly to the request, suffered himself, after keeping the people in suspense for six weeks, and thereby increasing their anxiety about him, to be carried to the Kremlin and crowned czar of all the Russias.

It may not be uninstructive to take a short retrospect from this point, which opens a new era in her history, of the progress of Russia towards this introduction of the elective principle into her government.

From the earliest period the efforts which were made, with greater or lesser success, to consolidate the empire, were uniformly resisted by the discordant materials over which the grand princes were called upon to preside. It absorbed ages of civil warfare to reduce the mighty chaos to order; and even when the vast territories that finally fell under the sole dominion of Ivan III. were united in a common bond of amity, we find that the nations lying on the borders took advantage of the weakness springing from the scantiness of the population, and the great distances that were to be traversed before assistance could be obtained, to harass the cities and settlements lying at the extreme points of the empire. The petty jealousies of the feudal princes, and the intrigues for extension of territory, and the grand principality in the distance, which urged them individually forward in a mad race for power, had long before exposed the whole to the cupidity of the Tartars, who were enabled to profit by the internal discontents, and to render the antagonist fiefs tributary to their sway. Yet the great principle of autocracy was secretly working upwards amidst this strife of chieftains; and

whenever a favourable disposition of circumstances enabled the grand prince to exhibit the tendency of the throne to make itself suprème, the means at his disposal were rarely wasted upon any minor considerations. Great difficulties lay in the way of this paramount design. The external enemies were scarcely less formidable than the internal feuds; and the Tartars, sitting enthroned in their Golden Horde, watched over both, enhancing the embarrassments within. By degrees all these obstacles were cleared away; and although many interruptions retarded the growth of the imperial authority, yet by degrees it began to assume a more positive and permanent character. The race of Rurik, the founder of the empire; of St. Vladimir, its earthly divinity; and of Yaroslaf, its beneficent legislator, still maintained, through all calamities and impediments, the upper hand; occasionally cast back by usurpations and temporary diversions. At length the old principle of succession from brother to brother was abandoned, to give more security to the reigning family. The longevity of each reign being thus increased, greater time was allowed to the development of a consistent system of administration; and the fortunate circumstance of an agreement of principle following in the right line for upwards of a century, finally led to the release of Russia from the thraldom of her barbarian conquerors, the complete subjugation and attachment of all the principalities, and the establishment of the throne upon a firm basis.

In the early part of this important struggle the clergy played a prominent part. It was the interest of the grand princes to link the ministers of religion with them in their public proceedings, because the Christian faith was one of the chief agents by which they hoped to keep alive, in the minds of the people, their natural animosity and prejudice against the Tartars. The popularity of the clergy was always a rallying point, whenever it became necessary to rouse the multitude into action. But while the clergy were permitted to

take so large a share in directing and governing the public mind, the grand princes wisely made the clerical authority subservient to their own; justly apprehensive that, if they permitted extraordinary powers to be wielded by so rich and influential a corporation, the result might prove fatal to the throne itself. Hence the clergy, kept in check by the prince, moved at his will, and dedicated their spiritual advantages to the promotion of the grand political design. Their pliant submission to the throne was still farther confirmed by the overthrow of the church at Byzantium; and, in the fall of the Greek patriarch, the Russian prelates suffered a humiliation which was promptly turned to his own benefit by the czar. The caution with which this profound theory of imperial despotism was prosecuted by the successive rulers in Muscovy, is as remarkable as it was successful. The necessity of establishing a supreme master, in whose hands should be vested an unlimited control over the scattered and far-spread possessions of the empire, was felt even by the clergy themselves, who knew that the existence of their own order depended upon the accumulation of power in the person of the prince who protected and encouraged them. The clergy alone could not have governed Russia, because the counsels of many would have been distracted by conflicting interests; nor could the grand prince unaided have swayed so vast and diversified a region, because no single authority could have penetrated its recesses; but both conjoined, with an extensive machinery of missions and inter-communication, reaching to all points, and exercising a moral and political surveillance which made the actual presence of authority to be universally felt, was admirably calculated to accomplish that which could not have been accomplished with such certainty or rapidity by either singly; while for mutual security, energy of action, and distinctness of purpose, the one was rendered subject to the other.

In the promotion of the same final end, the petty princes, originally exercising an irresponsible authority

within their own domains, were gradually reduced in rank and power. As their principalities fell in, by conquest or treaty, to the government of Moscow, a body of select boyards were commissioned to assume the local administration, and to represent the grand prince in the newly acquired territory. Under their jealous vigilance, the influence of the petty prince faded away, until at last those provincial sovereigns were content to subside into the class of the mere nobility, in the admixture with whom all the previous distinctions of their name and station were ultimately confounded. But this distribution of the boyards, and their investiture with a species of executive authority, was calculated to raise up a new power in the state, that must have proved inconvenient, if not perilous, to the throne. To prevent the accumulation of authority in their hands, and check the aspirations of their ambition, they too were depreciated by degrees, and after they had served all the uses of their first employment, they were drafted off in various situations, or merged in the military establishments. Thus the privileged classes insensibly fell away into court slaves or *employés*, and the degrees of nobility were lost in the general dependency in which, from the highest to the lowest, all were ultimately placed; the throne alone rising in power, and increasing its resources and its magnificence as the pressure of the aristocracy declined.

The general condition of the people, enslaved in mind and circumstances, assisted the advance of the imperial power. The Russians were, up to this period, generally ignorant of the influence and habitudes of civilisation; the arts were known to them only in beams of light that rendered their own darkness the more complete; until the reign of Ivan III. their current money consisted of the skins of beasts; their code of punishments was a series of barbarous inflictions, which degraded their manhood; and they were so unacquainted with the resources of other countries, that they used to boast that they alleviated the wants of the whole of Europe, because some European traders went to St. Nicholas and

Archangel to purchase grain, timber, and hemp. Even after the printing press was introduced amongst them, they were accustomed to consider anatomy, astronomy, chemistry, and other demonstrable sciences as black arts, and to treat their professors accordingly. The intermixture of the Russians with the Turks and Tartars produced none of those effects which might have been anticipated from such a fellowship. The Russians derived nothing from the strangers but their luxurious habits and their vices; all that was barbarous amongst them remained unchanged: their rude usages were merely embellished by external additions, which were but awkwardly engrafted on the native stock. The custom which permitted the princes of the reigning family to intermarry with their subjects was derived from the east, where the passions of the sovereign were permitted to be as absolute as his judgment; and it does not appear that Russia gained any thing by the introduction of the principle except a new and fruitful source of family rivalry and discontent. Many of the indolent and enervating practices of Asia were transplanted, to the deterioration of the hardy people of the north: such were the use of the long vestments, which in a warm climate invited the wearer to repose, the custom of the *siesta*, and the sumptuous, but inelegant, prodigality of the court, which spread amongst the people a taste for expensive pleasures, unrefined by delicacy and unrestrained by decorum. The dead silence which reigned in the presence of the czars was also a hint from Asiatic despotism; and it was so rigorously observed in Russia, that if the spectator closed his eyes in the midst of the levee he might suppose himself to be in a desert. The lazy mode of traffic in bazaars was of oriental origin, and taught the Russians to abandon their more active and healthful manner of conducting their commerce, leading them onwards by degrees to make up in chicanery and unfair dealing what they lost by the increased expenses of their new style of trading. The exclusion of women from the pale of society — if the boorish convention of men

so situated can deserve the name—produced also its amount of barbarism, and its accompanying crimes. Guilt of the most revolting description was practised by the peasantry, in consequence of the treatment to which they subjected their females; and the soil of the mind thus impoverished was a fit recipient for the depravities that sprang from the system of spies originated by Ivan the Terrible in the organisation of the select legion. Previously it was customary for the people to meet at noon daily in the great square: that was the only mode of communication they possessed; it was the medium for the cultivation of all the information they could obtain; there they conversed upon public and private affairs, and there their children received all the practical education which the rude customs of the country conferred. But the secret spies of Ivan, mixing with the people, and afterwards denouncing them, rapidly destroyed that last hold of knowledge and intercourse, and chased the populace back to their dark dens, to brood in savage loneliness over their wrongs, inflamed by ignorance. A population so degraded and insensible were easily conquered by the arts of the court, whether exercised through the medium of their terrors or their hopes. The people were, as a compact body, nothing. Their segregation deprived them of the power of co-operation, and they were at all times liable to be chastised or enslaved in detail, as it suited the purposes of their master. The policy of the grand princes, which left them an undefinable description of liberty in the privilege of selling themselves to slavery, was so useless to them for all political or social objects, that they hardly felt the weight of the new law which extinguished that privilege altogether. Their condition was so low in the scale of humanity that no fresh oppression could sink them to a greater depth of abasement; and probably the act of grace to the nobility which converted the inhabitants into serfs, produced some beneficial results to the peasantry, by giving the lords of the soil an interest in their lives, and imposing along with it a certain amount of

responsibility. The measure was useful, too, as an escape from the chaos of an unsettled constitution, and as an opening to the government for the recruiting service, which had been hitherto filled up with uncertainty, arising from the migrations and fluctuations of the population.

But, in the whole of this, an advance towards the concentration of the supreme power is visible. Even to the close of the reign of Ivan IV., and afterwards during the life of the helpless Feodor, Russia was consolidated, and her boundaries defined and protected. The recognition and firm establishment of the lineal succession had imparted to the original principle, before which all orders of the state gave way, a consistency and permanency which it could not have obtained under an elective or mixed government. The sovereign, born to the throne, was educated in the tenets of arbitrary control; he imitated the example of his predecessors with fidelity, and sacrificed all other considerations to the advancement of the interests of his family and the legitimate dynasty. Thus the nobles were repelled from too close a familiarity with the autocrat, and the clergy restrained, and even oppressed upon occasions, to remind them that all the power they possessed was a reflection from the single source from which all Russia derived its patent of life.

This concentration was rapid and complete; and was, in a great measure, attributable to the willing submission of the people to the Moscow line of Rurik. If it happened that the grand prince failed in all other arguments to exact the unanimous allegiance of his subjects, that argument was always successful; for the traditional glories of the foundation of the empire, exaggerated from generation to generation, afforded a ground of appeal to their nationality which they were never disposed to deny. It was, perhaps, the only virtue that subsisted for any considerable time untainted amongst them: in the midst of feuds and confusion, they were still fas-

cinated by the charm that resided in the name of a Muscovite descendant of Rurik.

With the death of Feodor, however, the charm was dissolved. The race of Moscow was extinct: the principle of lineal succession was at an end: the sovereignty reverted to the people, and became an object of jealousy and strife amongst the foremost men of the state. Boris, the ablest and most influential person in the empire, stood nearest to the throne, which, for some years before, he had encircled by plots, driving away from all participation in the actual government all those nobles whose personal claims might afterwards embarrass him in his usurpation. His election, confirmed by the voice of the multitude, introduced a novelty into the empire which threatened to shake to its centre that vast power which the crafty policy of many sovereigns had accumulated. Convinced of the difficulty of securing his election and maintaining his ascendancy, so long as the people at large possessed the vestige of an electoral privilege, or while the numerous ranks of the nobility and land proprietors were cast back from any share in the proceedings of the government, he wisely interdicted the popular claim to the prerogative of interference, and threw into the hands of the nobility the privileges of which he thus deprived the mass of the community. This proceeding reduced the numbers of those who should retain the right of judgment, and propitiated their votes. The circumstances of the empire were, therefore, essentially altered: its destinies were still in the hands of one man, but that man not holding his authority by divine right, as the lineal successor was supposed to do, and being elevated by the common voice, could not bequeath any fixed schemes of policy to posterity: and, even if he should succeed in sustaining himself above reproach, he could not prevent any capricious changes which a convulsion at any moment might produce. The concentration and unity of Russia under this illegitimate rule was consequently at all times at the mercy of circumstances.

Had so disastrous a transition been effected at an

earlier period, Russia must have become the prey of the Asiatic tribes on the one hand, and her European neighbours on the other. But, fortunately, as Russia advanced in knowledge and strength, Asia, enfeebled to the core by despotism, was fast sinking into dismemberment. The arid nature of the soil, the uniform influence of the climate, and the stagnant mind of the people, had all contributed to produce a result fatal to its cohesion, while the sanguinary and unintellectual character of its religion degraded its population, and destroyed their moral energies. The entrance of civilisation, dim and imperfect at first, into Russia, through that portion of her territories which lay nearest to Europe, strengthened her in her long struggle with a foe whose numerical advantages could not enable her to maintain a war against the might of a Christian faith, and the coherent organisation of cities and agricultural settlements, both of which were unknown in the desolate plains of the east. The superiority of Russia at length arose in an irresistible shape, and, combating with the loose and irregular masses that poured in from Asia, subdued for ever the power that for such a length of time had harassed her on that side. The internal union of her principalities, and the increasing resources of the throne, served to protect her against the aggressions of the European states on the other side; but now that the throne was deprived of its intrinsic perpetuity, and that a prospect of the dissolution of the political elements of the empire broke upon the watchful Poles, Russia was no longer safe. Asia, it is true, was powerless and incapable of action; but Poland, whose progress in civilisation, in consequence of her closer vicinity to its seat, was more rapid than that of the northern kingdoms, was the point from whence all the danger was to be apprehended. The acquisition of Lithuania, which, by its position, possessed a still greater power of turning the calamities of Russia to advantage, armed Poland with almost irresistible means of aggression, which she had too much genius not to feel and exert.

It should be remarked, however, that the ascendancy which Poland possessed at this point of time over Russia was purely the effect of accident. It did not originate in any peculiar sources of superiority inherent to that kingdom: it was produced by a succession of events which led to the temporary derangement of Russia, and not by any advantages, either natural or acquired, on the part of Poland. A comparison of the contemporary histories would only show that Poland retained her original dynasty longer than Russia; and that, therefore, the division of the soil into appanages, and the struggle amongst the princes of the blood, was of a later origin. But, while Russia was suffering from evils which the longevity of the race of Piast averted from Poland, the principle of consolidation was silently working to the surface. In Poland, on the other hand, that principle was accelerated downwards by every fresh cause of dissension. The feud for the throne, and the dilacerations that sprang from it, came after the reigning family, on whom the regards of the people were fixed, had ceased to exist: in Russia, the feud interrupted the line, which it never extinguished, and was finally absorbed by the line again. The affection, too, of the Russians for the family of Rurik was associated with loftier recollections and prouder glories; Rurik descended upon Russia a conqueror surrounded by circumstances which made him royal at once: Piast, on the contrary, arose from nothing; the origin of his dynasty was unwarlike, vulgar, and uninspired by any higher claims than that of citizenship. But, when the race of the founder became extinct in Russia, the cementing principle ceased to operate, and the parts, hitherto bound up together in the one point of union, fell to pieces: it was at this juncture that Poland saw the opportunity of making successful head against her natural enemy, and availed herself of it with promptitude.

In 1598, Boris Godunof, by the voice of the electors, and through the intrigues of his friends, ascended the throne of Russia. A crown, obtained by indirect

and fraudulent measures, could not be preserved without tyranny. Boris, conscious of the jealousies which his elevation engendered in the minds of the nobles, and especially in the family of the Romanoffs, who were allied to the race of Rurik, but not to the Moscow line, was constantly haunted by apprehensions, and sought to lose them in the revel, and to propitiate them by the sacrifice of all persons whom he suspected. Had he been a legitimate sovereign, he would have conferred lasting benefits upon his country, because he was a wise and paternal ruler in all matters apart from his personal affairs. He bestowed considerable pains on many laudable measures of improvement; but these were so sullied by acts of merciless revenge, to which he was moved by the danger in which he was placed by his usurpation, that it is difficult to separate his merits from his crimes.

The Tartars of the Crimea, immediately after Boris was proclaimed czar, exhibited a disposition to renew their old hostilities; but Boris promptly turned his attention to that part of the empire, and, assembling a numerous army, availed himself of the opportunity of ingratiating himself with the troops. The descent of the Tartars was merely an idle threat; but the occasion was one which contributed considerably to enlarge the popularity of Boris. He exceeded all his predecessors in the splendour and hospitality of his entertainments, in the frequency of the amusements which he provided for the soldiery and the citizens, and the general amenity and condescension of his bearing in public. It seems to have been the policy of the tyrants of Russia to conciliate the lower orders, in order that they might, with the greater facility, crush the aristocracy, from whom they chiefly dreaded opposition; and Boris was eminently successful in his attempts to ensnare the affections of the multitude, although he had actually deprived them of the only fragment of liberty they possessed.

In the commencement of his reign he evinced a

strong desire to cultivate the friendship of the several powers of Europe, from whom severally he received ambassadors at his court; to extend to all his subjects in common the means of procuring cheap and rapid justice, in the fulfilment of which he gave audiences for the purpose of receiving and redressing complaints; and to diffuse abroad a taste for European knowledge, and instruction in those arts and sciences which had hitherto been neglected and despised. In some of these wise projects he met great resistance from the clergy, who, released from the presence of a sovereign who ruled them by a mission from Heaven, began to exhibit uneasiness and impatience of control. Thus constantly thrown back upon the uncertain tenure of his power, and reminded that he was not a legitimate master, Boris was forced to exert arbitrary and unjust means to maintain his authority. The current of the official and privileged classes was running against him, and he was compelled to erect such defences as the necessities of the occasion required. But even out of this difficulty he contrived to extract some benefits for the country. For three years a famine fell upon Russia, paralysing the efforts of industry, and spreading misery and distress over the whole empire. Throughout the whole of this calamitous period, Boris incessantly employed himself in devising modes of relief, and levying from the surplus funds of the rich a treasury of alms to alleviate the wants of the poor. Out of his own abundant coffers he daily distributed several thousand rubles, and he forced the nobility and the clergy, who, with a grasping avariciousness, kept aloof from the miseries that surrounded them, to open their granaries, and to sell him their stores of corn at half price, that he might distribute it gratuitously amongst the impoverished people. These exactions depressed the wealthy, and won the gratitude of the needy; but still they were insufficient to meet the whole demand of poverty. Great numbers died, and Boris, unable to provide sustenance for them while

living, caused them to be buried with respect, furnishing to each corpse a suit of linen grave-clothes.

These benevolent exertions of Boris were viewed with distrust and malice by the nobility, who clearly enough discerned the policy that lay at the bottom. Their murmurs arose in private, and gradually assumed a sterner expression in public. At the feasts, and even in the court itself, the signs and words of disaffection could not be misunderstood. The insecurity of his position urged Boris to protect himself by a machinery of terror. Into a small space of time he crowded a number of executions, and consigned several of the discontented grandees to imprisonment and exile. His alarm magnified his danger, and supplied him with expedients of cruelty. At his own banquets he did not hesitate to rise up and denounce particular individuals, who were immediately seized upon by his adherents, and either put to death or cast into dungeons, or banished, and their properties confiscated to the state. Despotism penetrated to all classes; the peasantry, bound to the soil, were further oppressed by penal laws. Amongst other sanguinary provisions, it was enacted that all the individuals of a family were held to be involved in the punishment of a single member. It was also declared that every Russian who passed beyond the frontiers was a rebel to his country, and a heretic. A father was invested with all the powers of a despot in his hut, and allowed to inflict summary punishment upon his wife and children, the latter of whom he was permitted to sell four times; and this regulation was annulled only by the bondage to the fief, which substituted a worse tyranny for the domestic slavery. The merciless rule of Boris may be regarded as the consequence of his situation, which exposed him to hazards from which he could not escape except by some such decisive and terrible measures. The iron sway pressed down the expiring spirit of licentious freedom. The wandering minstrels who had hitherto travelled through the country, perpetuating in their

songs the historical glories of Russia, and inspiring the people with proud sentiments of national emulation, disappeared. The metrical chronicles perished in the general dismay. The immediate results of this struggle to preserve the object of his guilty ambition, were an extensive emigration of the peasantry, who fled from the scene of misery to embrace the wild freedom of the Cossacks, or seek protection from the king of Poland; and an atrocious *jacquerie* succeeded, which was, for a short time, triumphant. In the midst of this confusion, and while the whole empire was in a state of disorganisation, the throne was assailed by an impostor, who cunningly availed himself of the growing infidelity to put forward an impudent claim to the sovereignty.

A monk called Otrefief, who had learned, in the retirement of his convent, that he bore a striking likeness to the prince Dmitri, hit upon the daring expedient of assuming the name of the prince, giving out that the report of his death was false, and that another youth, who had been substituted for him, had been murdered in his place. The love which the people felt for the royal stock this monk calculated upon for an immediate recognition of his fabricated claims, and he saw, in the discontents occasioned by the severities of Boris, another ground of hope. The Russians, wearied of the illegitimate government, were glad of any excuse by which they might overturn it; and the imposition was consequently hailed with satisfaction by multitudes who disbelieved in its truth, and by many who were deceived by the specious arts of Otrefief, and the apparent likelihood of his tale. The personal resemblance was admitted by every body to be singularly strong; and even the gestures and tone of voice of the murdered prince were imitated by the impostor with such success, that many of those who had known the prince from childhood were disposed to admit, even against the evidence of circumstances, that if he were not the prince, nature had made him the prince's counterpart for some mysterious end.

Dmitri, as he is called in the Russian annals, proceeded at first with great caution. Apprehensive of showing himself abroad until he had secured a strong party ready to vindicate his claims, he retired to Poland, where he soon made himself known to the principal nobles and others possessing public influence. To them he entrusted, as a secret, in the beginning, the narrative of his wrongs, highly coloured, and wrought up to excite their sympathies. The interests of Poland were evidently concerned in this matter; for, whether the story were true or false, it was useful as an instrument whereby Boris might be deposed. By degrees, stimulated by interest, as well as won by Dmitri's artful recitals, the chief persons amongst the aristocracy declared that they would render him all the aid in their power towards the accomplishment of his objects. Dmitri was indefatigable in his exertions. Possessed of a fine figure, a commanding eloquence, and the most insinuating manners, he rendered himself welcome in all companies; and learned, with remarkable rapidity, the Polish language, in order to qualify himself still more for the duties that lay before him. Nor did he rest here. He represented to the Poles that he was disposed to embrace the catholic faith; and by assuring the Roman pontiff that, if he should be so fortunate as to recover the throne of his ancestors, he would dedicate the rest of his life to the gratifying labour of recalling his subjects within the pale of mother church, he completely secured the patronage and the blessing of that powerful prelate. The aspect of his hopes grew daily more bright. Sendomir, a wealthy and influential boyard, was so captivated by the graces of his conversation, that he promised him his daughter Marina in marriage, whenever he should become czar of Muscovy; and Marina, equally fascinated by the flattery of the throne and the supposed prince, cheerfully assented to this bond, which was to link the future sovereign still more closely to the people who so warmly espoused his cause. Through the interest of Sendomir,

the king of Poland was won over to his side, so that his first steps in the prosecution of his bold undertaking were attended with eminent success.

The news, however, of his pretensions, and the noise he was making in Poland, soon reached the court of Moscow. Boris, who knew that he was an impostor, but feared that the discontented portion of his subjects might affect to believe his story for the sake of using it as a justification of a conspiracy against the throne, instantly proclaimed Dmitri to be an adventurer, and employed a number of spies, who were armed with authority to seize him and put him to death. He also prohibited all intercourse between the Poles and Russians, compelled the patriarch to excommunicate with a terrible anathema all those who should place any credit in Dmitri's representations, procured the testimony of the living mother of the murdered prince to the fact of her son's death, and finally wrote to the king of Poland denouncing the impostor, and entreating of his majesty not to give him any countenance. But all these precautions and proofs failed to produce any effect beyond that of exciting more vividly the curiosity of the people. Dmitri revenged himself upon the czar by pursuing an equally spirited and public course in Poland. With consummate effrontery he persisted in asserting his rights, which he declared that Boris impugned from motives of fear and selfishness: he detailed the whole story of Boris's designs upon his life; the extraordinary interposition of Providence, which preserved him for the sacred purpose of rescuing his faithful subjects from the thraldom of usurpation; and reiterated his determination never to cease in his virtuous efforts to restore the throne of Muscovy to the line of Rurik. These plausible representations, and the gallantry of the tone in which they were put forth, procured him a multitude of adherents in Russia, of whom the dissatisfied courtiers were prominent and active. Many persons, who were well aware of the deception, regarded the event as a just retribution upon the sacrilegious Boris; but the great

mass of the population, to whom the suspicions of the murder had been conveyed in an unauthenticated shape, really believed that Dmitri was the son of Ivan, and resolved to protect to the utmost of their power a prince who was so miraculously preserved to them. Thus a strong party, consisting of levies from all ranks and classes, was formed in Russia on his behalf before he ventured to appear there; and his physical resources were still further augmented by the earnest support he now received from the king of Poland, and a declaration in his favour which was unanimously agreed to by the Cossacks of the Don. Encouraged by so many demonstrations of allegiance, he formed all his plans for action, and in 1604 appeared on the Russian frontier at the head of a small but efficient army, composed of Poles and Cossacks. Boris, who received constant intelligence of his movements, despatched a numerous and powerful army to meet him. Upon the issue of this contest the fate of both depended, and the soldiery on each side were animated by the enthusiasm that inspired their leaders. Previously to the battle, Dmitri prayed in front of his troops, commending his righteous cause to the care of Heaven, and then, addressing his followers in language of stirring energy, appealed to them with such effect, that they resolved to fall with him if they failed to achieve a victory. The superior numbers of the Russian troops for a long time appeared to keep the advantage on their side; but the inspiring eloquence of Dmitri, which was often heard from rank to rank, exciting his soldiers, and the miracles of personal bravery which he enacted, frequently turned the fortune of the day in his favour. At last, after many fluctuations on both sides, Dmitri finally remained master of the field.

This signal achievement enhanced his merits in the eyes of the people, and fixed the wavering feelings of the prejudiced and superstitious. Amongst so ignorant a body as the peasantry of Russia, it was not difficult to disseminate the notion that Providence had fought on

the side of truth, and that however a reasonable douht might have been entertained before, there could not now exist any just ground for refusing to acknowledge the claims of a prince on whose behalf even Heaven itself ad vouchsafed to exhibit its auspicious protection. Dmitri was careful to reap from the event as much profit as it was capable of producing: he treated the prisoners with familiarity and kindness, addressing them as his subjects, and extending to them the parental solicitude of a sovereign rather than the rigorous bearing of a conqueror. Wherever he passed, he ordered his followers to conduct themselves with the strictest humanity, which afforded a striking contrast to the brutal rage of the Russian soldiers, who exterminated the inhabitants of those districts that had exhibited any inclination to favour the cause of the impostor. It is not improbable that the jealousy of some of Boris's generals might have contributed to the defeat of his army, for many of them were so dissatisfied that they gladly favoured any circumstances that were calculated to produce a revolution. The union of all these circumstances rapidly increased the ranks of the followers of Dmitri, and diminished in proportion the available means of the czar.

But it seemed that the cause of Dmitri was destined to become irresistible. It happened just at this time that the northern lights appeared with unusual brilliancy, and that ominous announcement was accompanied by a comet, which the timid superstitions of the people interpreted as a prophetic revelation of the downfal of Boris. They beleived that these strange appearances in the heavens betokened the anger of God, and warned them to come to the support of their rightful prince; and that unless they speedily abandoned the usurper who had attempted the life of the last descendant of the royal race, the vials of the divine wrath would be poured out on their devoted country. Terrified at the suspended vengeance of Providence, the Russians no longer hesitated, and Dmitri was assured

by numerous voluntary offers of allegiance that he had now nothing further to apprehend.

Boris witnessed the progress of defection with dismay. Sweden, who had originally proffered him her friendship, which he unadvisedly rejected, would not, he feared, support him under such an accumulation of adverse circumstances: and he saw around him no hope of succour, or means of assistance. In the terrors of his situation, the phantom of the murdered prince rose to his imagination: he fancied that the approaching army of the impostor was commanded by the disinterred skeleton of his victim; his reason gave way before the horrors which the phrensy of remorse conjured up; and under the influence of mingled rage and insanity, he abandoned himself to despair, and swallowing poison, died in the palace, which but six years before he had entered with all the pride of a freely chosen and popular monarch.

His death was scarcely published in Moscow when a council of some of the principal nobility immediately made choice of his son Feodor as his successor. But his reign was almost as shortlived as the ceremony of his enthronement. The greater part of the army declared for Dmitri, and a distinguished general, who had been greatly favoured by Boris and the dowager czarina, went over to the impostor, bringing with him, either by compulsion or entreaty, a numerous band of followers. The people, with a similar zeal, espoused the new cause, and the unfortunate Feodor, before he had time to feel the weight of the sceptre, was dethroned and cast into prison, along with his mother and sister. Dmitri despatched a manifesto to Moscow, in which he again urged his claims, exhorting them to make a speedy recognition of his rights, and preserve the empire from the confusion that was the inevitable attendant of a dangerous hesitation in a matter of so much moment. This bold and open declaration produced an immediate effect upon the citizens: they removed the only remaining impediment to his reception by transmitting to him a full acknow-

ledgment of his claims; and, thus favoured and protected on all sides, Dmitri made a splendid entrance into Moscow, at the head of a large body of Poles, and was, with all necessary pomp, crowned in the palace of the czars.

Reverses so strange as these could not but disturb the settled institutions of the country; and, by precipitating a rapid succession of theories, as different from each other as the characters of the sovereigns by whom they were promulgated, diffused amongst the people a sense of insecurity. Boris Godunof might have accomplished a salutary change in the administration of the government; but all that was good in his nature was sacrificed to the anomalies amidst which he was placed. His own convictions were constantly resisted by feuds and jealousies, and he was not permitted to labour for the public good. From the general tendency of his measures, it may be presumed that he was forced against his inclination into acts of an extra-judicial and despotic description; and that, if he had succeeded peacefully to the throne, and was freed from the necessity of protecting himself against the petty rivals and secret enmities to which his elevation exposed him, he would have ultimately increased the happiness, by confirming the privileges and enlarging the knowledge, of the people. But he was thwarted in all such attempts; partly by the clergy, who never relished his authority, and principally by the nobility, who viewed it as an encroachment upon their prerogatives. If he be judged by his performances, he cannot be placed amongst the few who contributed to improve the condition of the empire; but, upon a patient review of his life, from the moment when he assumed the guardianship of the imbecile Feodor to the close of his reign, it will be admitted that the greatest injury he inflicted upon his country was the act of usurpation. From that sprang all the rest. Had he been content to bestow upon Russia the benefits of his wisdom in any station to which he might have aspired

without reproach, he must have maintained a distinguished and honourable place in history.

The opening of the reign of Dmitri was auspicious. The people felt as if they were restored to peace and security, and even the nobles, gratified for the moment with the downfal of Boris, relinquished their own views in the general contentment. The personal bearing of Dmitri was highly attractive, and his urbanity to his subjects acquired him a large share of their good-will. Amongst other acts which secured his popularity, were the severities with which he treated corrupt judges, whom he frequently admonished and punished for partiality or venality in the administration of justice; while, in order to render justice accessible to the poor, he gave regular audiences two or three times every week, when the poorest persons were freely permitted to approach him, and place their grievances in his hands for redress. By such measures as these, following so closely upon a rule of uncertain despotism, the new sovereign became a great favourite with the country, and the happiest anticipations were formed of the prosperity of his reign.

But his sudden elevation, the extraordinary success of his fabrications, and the flattering reception he had met both in Poland and Russia, intoxicated his reason; and the throne which he had gained almost by a miracle, he was unable to fill with prudence. While the sceptre was yet unreached, he observed a course of remarkable self-denial and unsparing toil; his movements were governed by a judicious caution, and he exhibited a temperance and forbearance from which the most cheering hopes of the future amelioration of the political condition of the people were drawn. For a short time after he had been crowned he justified the most sanguine expectations of his supporters, who recognised in him all the attributes of a brave and skilful warrior, which it appears he possessed in an eminent degree, united to the ability of an instructed statesman. In the field, his skill in the management of artillery, his presence of mind and indomitable courage, were not less praiseworthy than

his discrimination and forethought in council. The dream of his ambition had been, however, so easily and rapidly realised, that he imagined he could carry without difficulty any further projects of aggrandisement into effect. He was bewildered in the splendour of his triumphs; and, forgetting that the most delicate and dangerous portion of his task was to preserve himself safe upon the throne, he gave himself up to the indulgence of inordinate passions, in the gratification of which he perilled the security of his dizzy ascendancy.

Perhaps no man can wholly fulfil the duties of a ruler, unless his education has been directed into that channel. The habitudes of private life, of unrestrained intercourse, and of common-place associations, form an incompetent preparation for the novelty of a station which admits of no equality, and which is removed from the ordinary sympathies and moral influences which affect the rest of mankind. The ascent to so elevated a position demands extraordinary self-control, and a complete subjugation of those personal feelings of gratified ambition which it is so obviously calculated to inspire. The mind, untrained in the uses of authority, and unaccustomed to the indulgence of an unrestrained right over life and death, and the happiness and misery of a great community, requires to be fortified with a judgment superior to the temptations of power, and stronger than the passions which are incidental to all mankind. In those instances where republican forms of government have displaced monarchical institutions, the inevitable display of licentiousness has been corrected by the check which is afforded by the distribution of the royal power in the hands of several individuals: but there is scarcely an example in which one ambitious man has ascended from obscurity to an unrestricted sovereignty, such as that of Russia, without falling into extravagant courses which forced a popular reaction. The principles which men imbibe who have lived to manhood under the impositions of authority, are widely different from the principles which are familiar to those

in whom the authority resides. The governed view all things under a different aspect; they look from a level. The governors, gazing down from an imperial height, despise, or fail to appreciate, those numerous and minute objects which, in the main, constitute the basis of national prosperity. There is in both an alloy of circumstances; their vision is bounded and narrowed. What is required is an extended experience, an habitual contemplation of the wants of the body at large, and a gradual preparation for the exercise of the supreme power, through an ordeal of constant activity and restricted influence. A man should be subjected to control before he be allowed to control others; and accustomed to command under limitations, before he be invested with unlimited sway.

Unfortunately, Dmitri had never been favoured with any of the advantages of a disciplined education; and with abundant capacity to govern the nation, he was destitute of the power of governing himself. For a short time he was prudent, anxious, and sincere; but the willing obedience of the slaves that surrounded him led him to suppose that his most exorbitant desires would be submitted to without a murmur. Once he violated the circumspection which was even more necessary to his own security than to the welfare of Russia, it was impossible to place any bounds to his career. The first acts of his which disgusted the people were the appointment of numerous Poles, who had followed in his train, to certain posts of emolument and dignity, to the exclusion of meritorious officers, some of whom had served their country in the field, and were justly entitled to the first consideration. His attachment to Poland carried him to the most unwise lengths, in seeking the means of showering honours and favours upon the multitude of the natives of that country that constantly resorted to Moscow. He spared no expenditure to display the welcome with which he received them; and at last his court was almost wholly composed of Poles, but few of the Russians being permitted to remain near his per-

son. The indulgence and partiality thus lavished upon them incited them to absurd demonstrations of superiority; they jested and sneered at the Russians in the streets, openly ridiculed their customs and their religion, and wantonly violated the laws of hospitality and manhood by corrupting the virtue of the Russian women. The people, who had good reason for believing that Dmitri secretly countenanced his favourites in the commission of these dangerous excesses, unceremoniously exhibited the discontent that was rapidly growing up amongst them.

The nationality of Dmitri was no sooner become an object of suspicion, than it was discovered that the signs of his inallegiance to Russia were not confined to his encouragement of the Polish adventurers. It was evident that his reverence for the Greek church had given way to a new zeal for the papal faith; his indifference to the national religion was not less remarkable than the earnestness with which he protected the worship of the Poles. This was treading upon unsafe ground. Their religion was dearer to the Russians than even life itself, and they were prepared to defend it at every hazard. It was, therefore, with feelings of ire and abhorrence that they witnessed the taunts and indignities which Dmitri heaped upon the clergy, who, as a political body, apart from the functions of their holy office, might have long endured the contumely of the czar without exciting popular sympathy, had not that contumely sprung from a spirit of opposition to the religion of which they were the responsible ministers. The offence offered to the clergy by Dmitri was assumed, and justly, as an offence aimed at the Greek church, and the people resolved to avail themselves of the earliest opportunity of retaliating on the enemy of their creed.

In this resolution the boyards about Moscow were not reluctant to join, for they too had a cause of hatred to revenge upon the prince. Dmitri, conscious of the insecurity of his throne, attempted to rule the powerful families by acting upon their terrors. His own appre-

hensions drew him into a species of nervous tyranny, which was constantly operating in small details, without really subduing the disaffection that was weaving its subtle web around him. He frequently reproached the boyards, and the rest of the Muscovite nobility, with the tardiness of their acknowledgment of his claims, and almost daily reminded them that their present allegiance was the consequence of their fears; that he had conquered them in their own capital; and that they never would have admitted his rights if he had not compelled them. The purport of these rash conversations of the czar was to show the boyards that he suspected their fidelity, and was on his guard against them; but while he believed that he was deterring them from entering into conspiracies, he was really suggesting the idea, which they were willing enough to embrace. Independently of this personal source of dislike to Dmitri, the voluptuousness of his court, and the open profligacy and foreign habits of the most licentious description which he encouraged, gave universal dissatisfaction to the more distinguished circles of society. On one occasion, he removed the young Feodor, whom he had deposed, and his mother and sister, from the prison where they were confined, and ordered them to be strangled; but he preserved the life of a second sister, who was very beautiful, dishonoured her, and then banished her to a nunnery. Such exhibitions, now that Russia was relieved from the odious oppressions of Ivan the Terrible, and just as the empire was beginning to look forward to a season of tranquillity, could not be borne with patience. The result was soon evident in the altered demeanour of the populace. A short time before, Dmitri was always received in public with demonstrations of joy; but now, whenever he went abroad, he was met by looks of gloom and murmurs of distrust.

In this crisis of his fortune, he invented an expedient by which he hoped to restore himself to the confidence of his subjects. The widow of Ivan, who had been long before immured in a convent by the orders

of Boris, and kept there by the similar policy of his successor, was suddenly released from her confinement; and Dmitri, working upon the weakness of her nature, forced her publicly to acknowledge that he was her son. The unfortunate lady, who was well aware that if she refused to comply with this exorbitant demand her life was in jeopardy, consented to assist the impostor in his deception, and made a full declaration of the truth of the statements he commanded her to authenticate. But the fraud did not satisfy the people. The doubts which they originally entertained, but were induced to suppress, broke out anew; and not even the presence of the living mother, and the arts of the pretended son, were sufficient to recall them to their allegiance. The obstinacy with which they refused their assent to a claim which they had so recently admitted, was entirely governed by the fluctuations that had taken place in their feelings towards the czar. It was their pleasure to depose Boris, and consequently their interest to admit the usurpation of Dmitri; but Dmitri having proved himself unworthy of the affection they had shown him, their interest dictated the reversal of their former acquiescence. The proofs of Dmitri's birth had never been canvassed by any competent tribunal, and were granted in the hurry and excitement of a revolt; and as there were strong testimonies extant of the fact of the young prince's murder, it required very little persuasion to make the people affect any opinion in the matter which accorded with their political bias. Had Dmitri been sagacious enough to have maintained his popularity, he would never have found it necessary to bring forward any further evidence of the justice of his claims. But the anxiety he exhibited on this subject was in itself calculated to bring it into question; and the more he laboured to convince the Muscovites that he was the legitimate descendant of the royal race, the more the clamour of denial gained ground. To so ridiculous a height of opposition did the populace carry their distrust, that they instanced Dmitri's

method of mounting a horse as a proof that he was not of the blood of the czars. It appears that the sovereigns of Moscow, in imitation of the luxury and mysterious grandeur of the oriental usages, were wont to be lifted on their horses, and to ride along at a slow pace and with a grave aspect; whereas Dmitri, who had probably learned the custom in Poland, was in the habit of leaping upon his horse without assistance, and galloping forwards at a furious rate. From this irregularity in his horsemanship arose a new argument to dispute his title to the throne.

A multitude of such circumstances, insignificant and inconsequential in themselves, were seized upon with avidity as pretexts for bringing the czar into disfavour. The discontent spread rapidly amongst the people, and an opportunity at length arrived for giving vent effectually to their long-smothered indignation.

This opportunity was on the occasion of the marriage of Dmitri with Marina, the daughter of the Polish boyard. The fact that Marina was a Pole and a catholic sufficed, without any further provocation, to rouse the anger of the Muscovites. But that fact, which was sufficiently exasperating, was rendered still more irritating by the manner of Marina's entrance, and the treatment which the Russians received at the bridal ceremony. The princess was attended by an armed and numerous retinue of Poles, who entered Moscow with the haughty bearing of victors, rather than the courteous demeanour of invited guests. Their numbers excluded the Russians from all participation in the festival; and the attentions which the czar paid to them, and to his father-in-law especially, and the contempt which he in an extra spirit of folly exhibited wards the citizens, increased the gathering rage of he insulted people.

In addition to these provocations a report was spread that a timber fort, which Dmitri had caused to be erected in front of the gates of Moscow, was built solely for the purpose of giving his bri[illegible] a martial

spectacle; and that the managers of the fête intended, under the directions of the czar, to entertain the lady and her attendants, who were to be placed at a height in a situation of security where they could command a view of the multitudes below, by a very novel species of exhibition. Agreeably to the programme of this amusement, the Polish troops and the czar's body guard, consisting entirely of foreigners, were to throw firebrands and missiles amongst the spectators, and then to commence a dreadful slaughter, by way, it was insinuated, of establishing a terrible example of the power of Dmitri, and fixing him more firmly upon the throne. The news of the intended massacre fired the train of suppressed hatred, and it exploded in a scene of horror.

The prince Schnisky, who entertained a personal grudge against the czar on account of an indignity he had put upon him in condemning him to death, and then insultingly granting him his pardon just as the axe was raised to strike, placed himself at the head of the enraged populace. The clergy, who had long fomented the secret disaffection of the people, now openly united themselves in the revolt, and went from house to house denouncing the czar as an heretic, and calling on the Muscovites in the name of their religion to resent the injuries and blasphemies it had suffered at the hands of the lying Dmitri. The entire narration of his imposition was unveiled; the tendency of his opinions in favour of Poland and the catholic faith declared; and the many acts of private wrong and public treachery which he had committed were described with a bitter and appealing eloquence. The effect of this sudden and energetic movement was complete. The Muscovites, inflamed by the bold proceedings of the clergy, and panting for revenge, rushed on, headed by Schnisky and the prelates, to storm the palace of the czar. The whole city was in confusion. The Polish troops, panic-struck by this unexpected demonstration, fled in consternation through all the outlets to gain the open country; but as they passed to the suburbs of the

capital, they were met by groups and straggling parties, and slaughtered on the spot. Wherever a Pole was to be found, whether he had hidden himself in the vaults, or stolen in disguise to some obscure retreat, the penetrating vigilance of his pursuers detected him, so that but few escaped the immediate vengeance of the people: those who were not then put to death were afterwards seized on their homeward flight, and cast into prisons. While the foreign soldiers were thus expiating their offences in the streets and the high roads, the palace was surrounded on all sides by the people. Dmitri, overcome by his fears, and dreading the hatred he had so wantonly excited, abandoned his apartments, and sought to escape by a retired avenue from the court. He had not, however, gained any considerable distance, when he was overtaken by his pursuers, who, in the terrible exultation of triumph, pierced his body with a spear, and, having completed the work of murder, carried the corpse back to the palace, in the front of which it was exhibited for three days, that the people might come and inflict upon the carcass of the wretched impostor the full measure of posthumous abhorrence.

The only persons who were spared in the general havoc were the father-in-law and the wife of Dmitri, and a few of the Poles: they were all, however, kept in close custody, but liberated as soon as order was restored.

The palace was again in the hands of the people. The reign of the impostor was over, and the electoral privilege once more reverted to the popular body. But the experience of the recent disasters was not sufficiently impressed upon the minds of the people: they were so elated with the fulness of their victory, that they could not spare time from their rejoicings to set about the serious work of choosing a sovereign. Enslaved in the morning by an arrant hypocrite, and threatened with the imposition of a foreign power and an obnoxious creed, they found themselves free at night, with the corpse of the impostor lying at their feet, and the

splendid temple of his guilty profligacy in their possession. The occasion was one of universal congratulation; and the satisfaction was so exuberant in its outward demonstrations, that it afforded an opportunity to a crafty leader to secure the throne, while the populace were engaged in exulting over the death of its late occupant.

Schnisky, who had headed the revolt, and ingratiated himself with the people by the vigour and courage he displayed, was the first to ascend the stairs of the palace. With the menacing action of an infuriated patriot, he rushed forwards, brandishing the cross in one hand, and wielding his sword in the other: his language inspired his already heated followers, and they performed prodigious feats of valour in the deserted chambers of the czar. Schnisky avowed his object to be, the delivery of his country from the hands of an atrocious tyrant, the restoration of the right of election to the people, and the permanent definition and settlement of the public privileges, so that no usurper could hereafter trample upon the liberties of the subject. The oration was well chosen, and at a fitting moment. The inflamed assembly applauded the address of the valiant and patriotic Schnisky, and his name was wafted abroad on the wings of a thousand voices through the streets of the capital, as the deliverer of Russia. At a time when the sentiment of delivery was uppermost in every man's mind, and engrossed the whole attention of the citizens, the first name that happened to be associated with it was the most likely to secure their suffrages. So it fell out with Schnisky. When the boyards met to discuss the question of the succession, his plan was ripe for execution: a number of his adherents kept up the acclamations in the streets, and the city was agitated by the echoes of his exploits. He contrived to make his interest so secure in all quarters, that the council were scarcely permitted to deliberate; and after a debate, in which almost the whole body yielded to the influences by which they were publicly

and privately swayed, Schnisky was declared the successor of Dmitri the impostor.

The accession of a noble to the throne, under such circumstances, could not fail to excite the jealousy of his equals. The nobility were taken by surprise; and when they found that in the heat of the triumph over one usurper they had unconsciously lent themselves to the fraudulent designs of another, their rage was uncontrollable. The whole country gradually caught the sentiment of discontent, which was artfully fomented by the petty aristocracy through the means of that machinery which the new settlement of the peasantry had placed at their control. But this unequivocal manifestation of dissatisfaction, although it was universal, was by no means co-operative. All the nobles were displeased, but many of them sought to turn the general revolt to their own purposes. A favourable opportunity seemed to have opened for the assertion of such claims as individual lords might think fit to make upon the popular regards; and, accordingly, numerous appeals, directly and indirectly, were made on behalf of those amongst the nobility who thought that their names were likely to carry weight with the mass of the population. The consequence of this state of things was, that the empire was plunged into confusion, out of which no man saw his way clearly. The public interests were compromised in personal brawls; and the desire to remove Schnisky from the throne became so strong, that the means by which it was to be accomplished occupied but little attention. The reaction against him was as rapid as had been the extraordinary movement in his favour.

In this chaos of the social elements it was not surprising that new impostors should arise, and that a sceptre, which was held by so unpopular a man, should be attempted to be seized by any daring and ambitious spirit who should risk the hazard of turning the tide of opinion. The excesses that were daily committed in the provinces, the open violations of justice, and the

unprincipled infractions of the recognised privileges of the inferior classes, which distinguished this period of anarchy, further encouraged a project which, it might have been supposed, the recent ill success of a similar imposition would have rendered hopeless. The nobles who contended for the crown, perceiving, probably, that a fruitless disunion amongst themselves would have the effect of imparting strength to Schnisky, adopted the extraordinary expedient of reviving the dead Dmitri, whose corpse had been exposed to the eyes and insults of the Muscovites. The shame of so palpable a forgery did not deter them. They asserted that Dmitri was not slain, that he had escaped alive from the palace, and that he was prepared to come forward again to assert his inalienable right to the throne of his ancestors. This bold fabrication was not even checked by the declaration of the czarina, that the late Dmitri was an impostor, and that she had supported his false claims merely to save her life, which must have been forfeited if she had refused to aid him in his designs. But the cheat was too thinly disguised to obtain any very extensive credit. The people were indifferent to the plot; and the pretended Dmitri, consequently, never appeared.

But, although this invention of the Russian nobles failed of effect, it did not prevent a similar attempt to impose a new Dmitri upon the people. The Poles, interested on behalf of the princess Marina, and anticipating some future advantages from being enabled to exercise a secret influence at the court of Moscow, proclaimed another pretender to the throne. This person was a schoolmaster in Poland, who bore a strong personal resemblanee to the real Dmitri, and who was possessed of sufficient address and discretion to be intrusted with the performance of so prominent a part in the deception. In order to strengthen their plans, the Poles gained over the princess Marina to their side; and that lady, incensed against Schnisky, whom she regarded as the murderer of her husband, willingly

entered into a project by which she might be enabled to wreak ample vengeance on the czar. She did not hesitate to assert that the new Dmitri was really her husband, that he had made his escape during the insurrection in the city, and had fled into Poland; and, in order to give a greater appearance of truth to her statements, she embraced him publicly, and actually lived with him as his wife. The circumstances of the country favoured every audacious attempt upon the throne that carried the least appearance of likelihood; and the conduct of Marina gave such a colouring to the pretensions of the new cheat, that his immediate adherents, although they knew that the whole affair was an imposition, affected to regard it as a truth, in the hope of gaining those rewards ultimately which Dmitri lavishly prômised them, should he be so successful as to gain his object. A numerous train of followers appeared in the train of the Polish schoolmaster; and Russia was convulsed by distractions as he approached to claim his royal honours.

The advance of the impostor was greatly aided by the presence of the Polish troops, who were at the time in Russia, under the command of the marshal of the crown, the intrepid Zolkiewski. Hitherto, Sigismund had not taken any open or direct share in the troubles of Russia; but had merely connived at the proceedings of the nobles. Now, however, the diet, perceiving that the occasion was advantageous, declared war upon the empire. The success of the expedition was complete every where. The Russians were defeated in several engagements; and Smolensko at last fell into the hands of the victors, after a protracted siege of eighteen months. Schnisky was utterly routed by a force of 8000 Poles; although, according to some accounts, his army amounted to 30,000 Muscovites and 8000 Swedes, whom he had called in to his aid.

At this juncture Dmitri appeared, and was joined by the victorious forces under Zolkiewski. Elated with such splendid successes, the army marched on to Mos-

cow, which they closely invested: the Muscovites, knowing that they could not resist by force of arms, threw open their gates, and admitted them into the city.

The disasters that ensued were as ludicrous as they were injurious. New impostors constantly arose: the people were divided and perplexed in every quarter by a multitude of claimants upon the sovereignty. All public business seemed to give way before the absorbing question of the succession; and, while it was universally known, not only that the original Dmitri was a cheat, but that all those who sprang up subsequently in his name were merely imitators in his track, the ghost of the murdered usurper was reproduced in many places, and under a variety of devices, creating an immediate sensation wherever it appeared. Under circumstances so harassing, and pressed on all sides by a phantom that threatened him in the worst shapes of revenge, Schnisky was at last compelled to submit. He felt his power fading before the popular feuds: he was no longer able to control the details of the government, to manage the financial concerns of the empire, or to secure peace in any part of his dominions. The capital was already in the hands of the Poles; and he knew that it was in vain to contend against so many difficulties. In preference to pursuing a hopeless career, that could only terminate in a violent death, he consented to renounce the crown, and retire into a monastery. But he had no sooner embraced the cowl than he was given up to the Poles, who, in remembrance of the indignities he had heaped upon the husband of the princess, cast him into a dungeon, where he lingered out the remainder of his miserable life. Another turn in affairs induced the impostor to retire from Moscow, which, however, still continued in the hands of Zolkiewski.

It appeared that the race of false Dmitris was inexhaustible; for no sooner had one of these pretenders been detected and baffled, than another started up in his place. The Poles, deeply interested in the settlement

of the Russian throne on principles agreeable to themselves, and favourable to their own views, abetted these intrigues to an incredible length. Some of their cheats actually touched the sceptre for a moment, but only to recoil in fear from the dangerous object of their insane ambition. The Russian nobility, in this period of universal disorder, abandoned themselves to the most guilty licentiousness. In their own domains they acted with the capricious cruelty of despots; and out of Russia they volunteered to sell their country. Some of them carried their venal profligacy so far as to sign deeds of subjection to Poland; resigning Moscow to the hands of the wary ally, who only wanted a favourable opportunity to appropriate the empire to herself. Several of these degraded grandees presented themselves at the court of Warsaw, offering their services in many dishonourable ways, and asking as a reward the wealth of the few noblemen of their own class who yet remained faithful to the public interests. The situation of Russia was at this juncture so tempting to the neighbouring states, that it is less surprising that Sweden and Poland should have meditated aggressions, than that they did not carry their triumphs much farther.

The period immediately following the deposition of Schnisky must be considered as an interregnum. There was no sovereign authority. The empire was ruled by an incessant fluctuation of names and authorities. The struggle of the nobles for individual power, the firm resistance of the clergy, and the inflexible honesty of a few of the grandees, had the effect of keeping the throne in abeyance. One day one party was at the head of affairs; but a turn of fortune dismissed them from their functions on the next day, and a new faction, or an audacious chief, took their place. In the midst of this clamour of interests, the Poles arose in arms to mediate and conquer.

Sigismund, who had accompanied the army as far as Smolensko, and had remained there while his marshal advanced upon Moscow, now, in 1609, resolved upon

turning his position to immediate advantage. He found, however, much difficulty in overcoming the obstacles which his own recent support of the claims of the false Dmitri had created. Those Russians who had tendered their allegiance to the impostor, ashamed, perhaps, of the part they had taken, now refused to listen to the proposals of the king. They complained that they had been led into a conspiracy, and that, when they had embarked to the last extremity in its promotion, the Poles had deserted them, and left them to the disgrace of a signal discomfiture. The negotiators employed by the king worked, however, with such art upon the corrupt nature of the people, that, after repeated attempts, but not without considerable bribery, they at last succeeded in making a formidable party in favour of Polish interference. Nor did they rest content with merely prepossessing the people on behalf of their master, but they pushed their point to the incredible extent of prevailing on the most influential persons to agree to the nomination of the young prince Vladislaf, then in Poland, to the vacant sovereignty. This was the summit of the king's ambition: his final aim was to consolidate the two crowns; but, apprehensive of betraying his object too abruptly, he approached it by the less suspicious course of promoting his son in the first instance to the Russian throne. In 1610, this bold design was carried into effect. The Muscovites did homage to the absent prince in the capital by proxy, and finally surrendered the city into the hands of the Polish troops.

Thus far the project for the annexation of the great northern empire to the small kingdom of Poland was eminently successful. There remained no more to be done than to enter upon the duties of legislation, and to carry into effect the bond which the Russians had with such slight hesitation subscribed. Sigismund, however, wavered at the very moment when the prize was within his reach. He repented that he had permitted his son to be nominated, instead of having seized the crown for

himself, which the easy acquiescence of the people induced him now to believe might have been accomplished without difficulty. In the interval of hesitation which ensued between the declarations of the Muscovites in favour of Vladislaf and the next positive movement of Sigismund, the Russians had leisure for reflection. They saw the error they had committed, and their ardour towards the Poles abated in proportion. They perceived that the election of a Polish prince must lead to the introduction of the catholic faith; and, following the instructions of their clergy, who now exhibited an indomitable zeal in the protection of the liberties of the country, they required, as a condition of the elevation of Vladislaf to the throne, that he should embrace the Greek religion.

This was the moment when the influence of the clergy was most beneficially felt. While discord raged abroad, the church stood unshaken and incorruptible. The ministers of religion felt that the interests of the country were identified with the interests of their faith, and that they could not forsake the one without deserting the other. They saw, in the devastation that was making such rapid strides amongst all classes of the people, a deadly enemy to the only institution that had maintained itself unimpaired during the domestic war; and they perceived, in the prospect of a Polish czar, the destiny of a religion that had survived centuries of disaster. Every reason, human and divine, united to impel them forward. With them, and upon them, depended the salvation of the empire, both from the feuds that spread like a conflagration within, and the assailants that threatened them with subversion from without. They had no choice left but action: they threw themselves into the breach between Russia and her aggressors. In the brief but glorious struggle that followed, they proved the purity and courage of their characters, by sustaining themselves with the loftiest fortitude in the most trying circumstances. While the nobles of Russia, in this memorable period, fled from

the post of honour, or sold it to the enemy, the clergy exemplified their fidelity by innumerable acts of heroism and martyrdom.

In the meantime Sigismund had returned to Warsaw, carrying with him the wretched Schnisky in chains, and leaving Moscow in the hands of Zolkiewsky. The sight of the captive, however, was not sufficient to engage the interest of the Poles much further in a war which appeared to them to have for its object the advancement of personal ambition rather than the national welfare; and Sigismund, by the indecision he betrayed, lost a crown which had been within his grasp. The attitude of firmness taken by the clergy surprised the victor. He was unprepared for so bold a measure as the protest into which they entered against the papal church; and his own religious scruples were so strong, that he could not listen to a proposal which demanded of him the compromise of his son's faith. While he was thus wavering in doubt as to the course he ought to pursue, the Polish troops left behind in Moscow under the command of Zolkiewsky became clamorous and disorderly. The marshal in vain remonstrated upon the situation in which he was placed, and applied fruitlessly for money to pay the soldiers. The jealousies arising out of other circumstances were augmented by this new source of discontent, and frequent altercations took place between the inhabitants and the Polish garrison. At last their quarrels broke out into open hostilities, and the Muscovites rose in a body to expel the intruders; but not until the most disgraceful excesses had been committed on the other side. In the massacre that followed, the Poles murdered, says an historian, 100,000 Russians, and laid the greater part of Moscow in ashes, after having possessed themselves of a great quantity of treasure, with which they retreated into the citadel. A long and severe struggle ensued; and it was not without an enormous sacrifice of blood that the Muscovites at last succeeded in driving their enemies out of the capital, and forcing them to evacuate the empire.

In this extremity, and seeing that the Russians had resolved upon liberating themselves in the name of their religion, Sigismund at length relaxed in his views of the question of the national faith, and, hoping to reconcile the people he had so wantonly outraged, now offered to make his son conform to the Greek church. But it was too late. The people had taken their stand, and were not in a temper to be moved by a tardy repentance. They rejected his proposals with indignation, and turned themselves once more to consider the important subject which they had so long suffered to lie obscured in an unworthy conflict.

CHAP. XV.

STATE OF THE EMPIRE. — MIKHAIL ROMANOFF IS ELECTED CZAR. — RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON THE IMPERIAL AUTHORITY. — TREATIES OF PEACE WITH SWEDEN AND POLAND. — WISE ADMINISTRATION OF MIKHAIL. — MINORITY OF HIS SON, ALEXIS. — VENALITIES OF HIS GUARDIAN. — POPULAR COMMOTIONS. — A NEW DMITRI APPEARS, AND IS EXECUTED. — REVOLUTION IN THE UKRAINE. — ALEXIS DECLARES WAR AGAINST POLAND. — TREATY WITH SWEDEN IS RATIFIED. — THE UKRAINE IS UNITED TO RUSSIA. — REBELLION AND FAILURE OF THE COSSACKS. — DEATH OF ALEXIS. — EFFECTS OF HIS REIGN.

The empire had been so weakened by these continued evils, and commerce had suffered so severely, that the population at large saw the vast folly they had committed in lending themselves to the vicious intrigues of designing men. They felt that the last spring of hope was within themselves; that it was worse than fruitless to place any trust in the protection and fosterage of the neighbouring states, who only made their necessities an excuse for preying upon the last fragments of their means; and that security for life or property could not be obtained through any other measure than the establishment of the sovereignty in the person of some man who should combine the qualities of the statesman with that loftiness of character which should elevate him above the reach of faction. Such a man was difficult to be found. In the ranks of the nobility all was confusion, envy, and discord. Of the commonalty there was none so distinguished as that the popular choice could release him from the jealousy of the grandees. The clergy alone presented the source from whence Russia might draw in her extremity a monarch who should conciliate the prejudices of all parties. The adversities which had fallen on the empire were undoubtedly calculated to produce great men, who are said to be born of great occasions; and there were some who had won honour for their names during the period of oppression and perse-

cution. Amongst these was Pojorsky, a noble, who never relinquished his zeal on behalf of the national cause; but the order to which he belonged rendered his acceptance of the throne, had it been offered to him, a matter of very equivocal policy. The popularity he had secured during the disastrous dissensions that depopulated Moscow must have declined at once, if his glory had set in the crown; and he was too virtuous and sincere to avail himself of a reward which would have cast an obvious doubt upon the purity of his motives. The people, too, had their patriots; but it would have been still more dangerous to have elected a sovereign from amongst them, because whoever they might have chosen must have had to encounter the unrelenting opposition of that numerous, although divided, body over whose heads he must have sprung to his elevation. The clergy alone were exempt from the risk of jealousy either way. They had given immortal proofs of their honesty, of their public and religious devotion, and of the utility of a consolidated body in the midst of a conflict of scattered interests. Even the nobles could scarcely object to any mark of attachment that was shown to the clergy; and the people were too sensible of the obligations that they owed to them, not to be glad of an occasion to exhibit the strength of their gratitude.

Romanoff, the metropolitan of Rostoff, was, in especial, held in general esteem. He had inflexibly asserted the independence of Russia under the worst circumstances, and had been twice thrown into chains by the Poles for the courageous resistance he had offered to their encroachments. These sufferings, which he had endured in the public service, endeared him to the people: and now that the opportuuity came, they resolved to avail themselves of it. The family of Romanoff, too, was entitled on other grounds to the popular regards. The founder of the family is said to have been an obscure Prussian, who settled in Russia about 1350*; but for the 250 years that ensued, all those who bore the name

* Leclerc, Levesque, and others.

were distinguished by public virtue, by brilliant achievements, by national zeal, and by intermixture with the royal blood from whence the original dynasty arose. Mikhail Romanoff, the son of the metropolitan, was allied to the branch of the Ruriks; and it was believed that a prophecy from the lips of the last prince of that race had, long before such an event appeared to be likely of accomplishment, assigned to him the throne of Russia. Upon this youth, in grateful recognition of the virtues of his father, the choice of the people fell; and he was elevated to the sovereignty in 1613, at thirteen years of age. This election at once terminated the melancholy interregnum which had lasted for fifteen years, and during which time the empire had suffered incalculable injuries. It appears that he accepted the crown with reluctance. When it was first proposed to him, he firmly declined it. The fate of Boris and Schnisky, and the general disorder of the empire, were sufficient to deter him from accepting a post of so much danger. He had hitherto lived in the strictest retirement at the convent of Kostroma with his mother; and when the deputies from Moscow waited upon that lady to announce the wishes of the people, she besought them with tears to spare her son the intended distinction. On a second visit they were successful, and returned to the capital with the full consent of the monarch elect.

But although Mikhail Romanoff was thus freely elected, the solemn act was preceded by a jealous and vigilant debate in a national assembly, consisting of the boyards and their followers, and a numerous deputation from the leaders and citizens of the towns. The Russians had endured such heavy inflictions from former czars, and had so keen a recollection of the despotism to which their own weakness had lent force, that they now resolved to limit the privileges of the monarch beforehand, in order that he should possess as little power to do mischief as might be consistent with the dignity of his office and the general responsibility of the government. The discussion ended in the adoption of the

form of an oath, which was to be tendered to Mikhail Romanoff, and which he afterwards subscribed in the presence of the boyards. The substance of this oath was, that he would protect the Greek religion; that he would pardon all the acts of injustice that had been committed towards his father; that he would neither make any new laws, nor alter the old; that he should never undertake to decide any thing by himself, but that all causes should be tried according to the laws and the prescribed forms of trial; that he would not at his own pleasure either make war, or enter into terms of peace; and that, to avoid all vexatious litigation, he would surrender his own estates to his family, or incorporate them with the crown domains. The spirit of this singular declaration is evidently to curb the ambition of the crown, and to restrain it within a circle of responsibility. The people, desiring to preserve their own freedom, were not scrupulous in curtailing the freedom of the czar; and, rushing from the extreme of the tyranny that had oppressed them, they fell into the opposite extreme, which scarcely granted to the sovereign the power of doing them any good. But they had been so purified by misfortunes, and had tasted such bitter fruits of experience, that the principle of regeneration and improvement had taken root in their understandings, and the check which they had thus cautiously reserved to themselves was not, at this period of their endurance, misplaced.

This election commenced a new era in Russia. It is almost incredible that the calamities which had plunged the whole country into a state of confusion should have been so suddenly followed by an universal calm. The elevation of Mikhail Romanoff to the throne exercised at once that influence which is attributed to oil poured into troubled waters. The feuds ceased, as if by magic; the fever of disturbance subsided on the instant; all false pretensions to the crown, all mad projects of ambition, melted away before the charm of a name. Claiming but a small and indirect share of the hereditary

glories of the race of Rurik, the family of Romanoff appeared to take an equal place, or the next place, in the affections of the people. Without any of those historical recollections attached to it which gave a superior claim to the descendants of Rurik, and destitute of that subtle grace of divine right which invested them with a species of necromantic ascendancy over the superstitions of the people, the name of Romanoff ascended on the sudden to the height from which the extinction of the line had plucked down the name of Rurik's race. It was fortunate for the peace and security of the empire that this extraordinary transition worked so effectually: and if we look into the operating causes of that agreement of opinion, we shall not find much reason for surprise. In the first place, the Russians were wearied of tyranny in direct and indirect forms; and it was natural that they should select a monarch from amongst those who had suffered most by tyranny, and who were most likely to feel and comprehend its impolicy as well as its injustice. They had endured, also, so much war in its most harassing shapes, that they longed for peace, and looked to that quarter from whence it was most likely to be derived. The clergy had been the chief agents of their preservation, and of them, Romanoff, the metropolitan, had been conspicuous for his devotedness to the general cause: it was not surprising, therefore, that, desirous as they were of peace, and anxious for repose and a pacific respite from internal and external commotion, they should have fixed upon the son of a man so honourably distinguished to fill, under the guidance of his father, a throne that had for so long a time been the sport of factious and designing persons. The virtues of Romanoff acted as a master spell upon the affections of the people. To him they looked for a wise, and moderate, and paternal government during the minority of his son; and they relied for the rest upon the strict and exclusive terms of the obligations of the young sovereign's oath.

Nor were the hopes of the people disappointed. Mik-

hail Romanoff fulfilled the expectations that had been formed of him. He exhibited great moderation in the exercise of his authority; and carried his love of peace so far, that it sometimes amounted to resignation to circumstances which a demonstration of vigour might have averted. He re-created a regular army, but only for the purpose of preserving domestic tranquillity; and, assailed by various revolts at the opening of his reign, he never departed from the rigid principles of justice in the correction or punishment of excesses. His conservation of the public welfare never degenerated into acts of unnecessary severity.

An enemy, however, who had been lingering for some time on the frontiers, and had, in a vagrant spirit, even made an incursion into the interior, threatened to disturb the repose of Russia at the very moment when security was beginning to be felt. This was in the person of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, a young prince of consummate abilities both in the field and the cabinet, who had just then succeeded to the throne of his father, Charles IX. A short time before the death of that monarch, which took place in 1611, the Swedish general, De la Gardie, had obtained considerable successes in Russia; and upon his appearance on the verge of their territory, the Novgorodians sent ambassadors to Charles, with a message that implied their willingness to submit to the sovereignty of his younger son, Charles Philip, then only eleven years of age. Had Charles lived, it is probable that Russia would have become dependent upon Sweden, under the nominal rule of the young Swedish prince; but the message reached the king on his deathbed, and its purport was never carried into effect. Gustavus Adolphus, whose views were more moderate and magnanimous than those of his father, and who desired nothing more than to establish amicable relations and reciprocal advantages amongst the neighbouring states, repelled the notion of advancing his younger brother to the Russian throne; nor did he, although some of the Russian historians attribute such a design to him, ever

contemplate any aggrandisement, personal or national, arising out of the misfortunes of the empire.* But the obstinacy of the Russians, or rather their ingratitude, provoked him to carry arms into their country. The principal cause of the war consisted in the refusal of the Russians to repay to Sweden a sum of money which she had advanced to her in a season of distress. Gustavus Adolphus, educated in principles of the utmost rigour, was deeply offended at the dishonesty of this refusal to restore a loan advanced under such circumstances; and, at the head of a powerful and well-trained army, he crossed the Russian frontier, and took possession of the province of Ingria. All obstacles seemed to give way before him; so rapid, certain, and decisivé was his course. He next took the fort of Kexholm by storm; and following up his successes, laid siege to the strongly-fortified place of Plesko. Nor did his movements terminate here. He advanced upon the castle of Notteberg, situated on a small island at the mouth of the Narva, and deemed to be completely impregnable. The undertaking was considered as hopeless, and his generals earnestly urged him to abandon it; but he persisted in the attempt, and, landing his troops on the island, surrounded the castle, and took possession of it. All that was gained by the adventure was a brilliant reputation

* Tooke adopts, carelessly, as if it were a matter of course, the opinion that Gustavus Adolphus wished to appropriate the crown of Russia to himself But we have abundant evidences to the contrary, not only in the general character and actions of that monarch, but in the special circumstances connected with his invasion of Russia Witness his letter to sir John Merrick at the end of the campaign, when Plesko was on the point of falling into his hands, and he abandoned it for the sake of peace. "I have reduced the place," he observes, "to the point of capitulating; but, notwithstanding all my fatigues, expenses, and military losses, upon condition the Muscovites be duly and justly restrained for times to come, I lay my glory a sacrifice at the feet of England, with a view to convince mankind in general, that I waged this war, not from motives of ambition (for my territories are sufficiently large and powerful), but from actual compulsion and the necessity of things. It hath ever been, and is still, my inclination to cultivate peace and friendship with my neighbours. This, upon just and honourable terms, is most congenial to my natural temper; but if a lawful war is not to be healed by conciliatory and reputable measures, I am then ready to continue it with resolution" These sentiments, as wise as they are temperate, were written by Gustavus Adolphus at the age of twenty-one. The document bears date Narva, Nov. 30. 1615. Loccenius.

for perseverance, and a considerable stock of ammunition and provisions.

These successes of the Swedes, however, did not make any deep or permanent impression. In 1616 negotiations were entered into with Gustavus Adolphus; and in the following year, through the mediation of England and Holland, a treaty between the two nations was finally concluded at Stolba. In the course of this affair Russia was a loser, by the enterprise and superior military genius of the invader, and was obliged to submit to the cession of Ingria and Karelia, and once more compelled to evacuate Esthonia and Livonia; but the fault lay at her side originally, in attempting to evade the responsibility of a debt justly and responsibly incurred.

During the time that the Russian arms were engaged in the contest with Sweden, the restless Marina was still occupied in her schemes to recover the throne. Being now persuaded that all attempts in the name of Dmitri must prove fruitless, the last impostor having expiated his folly at the gallows, she announced an heir to the throne in the person of a boy whom she declared to be the son of Dmitri. An adventurer, named Zaruski, was appointed guardian to the child, and great pains were taken to excite the popular regards in his favour. But the artifice was stale. The people were tired of such repeated delusions; and, finally, Marina, whose improvident hopes carried her into personal danger, was seized and thrown into prison. Nor did her misfortunes end there. She was afterwards drowned, and the young pretender strangled; so that the last excuse to revive the obnoxious name of Dmitri was closed for ever.

The Poles, stimulated, probably, by the successful termination of the Swedish campaign, again showed themselves on the borders, although they had now no longer any adherents of consideration in Russia. The result was inglorious to both parties. The Polish troops, drawn into ambuscades by the Russian commander,

were lured into deserted districts, where numbers perished by the severities of the climate. Thus, surrounded by many dangers, they were willing enough to close hostilities; while the Russians were so anxious to get rid of their harassing adversary, that they entered into a treaty of peace for fourteen years and a half, consenting to evacuate Smolensko and several other towns to the enemy. These concessions were made to the exigency of the occasion, for the Russians cherished the project of redeeming the ceded territories on some future occasion; while the Poles were well satisfied with an arrangement which secured them greater advantages than the condition of their forces could possibly have enabled them to acquire. The treaty was ratified in 1619.

About this time the office of patriarch fell vacant, and Mikhail conferred it upon his father, much to the gratification of the people. The venerable pontiff now became directly associated in the government, and shared with his son in the toils of the sovereignty. Whenever an audience was given he sat at the right hand of the czar, and frequently received the credentials of foreign ministers, which were often specially addressed to him. His personal influence was extensive; and to that circumstance may be, in a great measure, attributed the clemency, and love of peace, which distinguished the reign of the young monarch. Connections were rapidly formed with other countries, and international intercourse liberally encouraged. Ministers were accredited to the courts of England, Denmark, Holland, and the German empire; and diplomatic residents from those nations were received at Moscow. Russia, so long considered as an Asiatic and uncivilised empire, began to take its place amongst the European states, and to cultivate those friendships which were likely to raise it to importance in the civilised world.

The peace with Poland, being for a limited period, was always looked upon by Mikhail as an amnesty subject to circumstances; and as he anticipated that before its

specific termination the Poles would exhibit a disposition to infringe it, or that he should be in a condition to contest the ceded territories, he applied himself early to the military protection of the frontiers, and to the improvement of the numbers and discipline of his army. The death of Sigismund hastened the expected violation of the treaty. Mikhail's forces were already on the frontier line; and, on the grounds that the peace into which he had entered was concluded with Sigismund and not with his successor, they penetrated into Poland, and, under the command of Sekin, the same general who had before valiantly defended Smolensko, they lay down before that city, 50,000 strong.

Uladislas VII., who had just ascended the throne of Poland, was surrounded by many difficulties. He was at a loss for money and troops; and it was not without considerable trouble that he succeeded in raising a small army in Lithuania, with which he at once advanced towards Smolensko. His success was immediate and complete. Sekin, once prompt, active, and courageous, appeared to be panic-struck. He had already lain in complete inaction for two whole years, encamped in sight of the city; and, although he headed a superior force, he fled from before the victorious arms of Uladislas, who pursued him into the depths of the forests where, lying within an intrenched camp, he resisted the Poles for five months. Sekin relied upon the intense cold, which was rapidly thining the ranks of the assailants; but Uladislas was resolved to endure the worst severities of his situation, so long as there remained a hope of ultimate triumph. He took up his abode in a wretched hut, and shared in common with his followers all the dangers and disasters of the perilous siege. At last, he exhausted the spirit of Sekin, who, perceiving the resolution of the foe, deemed it prudent to submit, and he accordingly abandoned his camp to the Poles, and entered into an engagement not to take any further part in the war. For this piece of cowardice, as well as the

whole course of his timid career, Sekin and his friends answered at Moscow with their heads.

Perceiving that he was not prepared to contest much longer with Poland, and justly apprehensive that the consequence of protraction of the war would be a descent upon Moscow, Mikhail prudently proposed terms of peace to the victor, by which he voluntarily surrendered all pretensions to Livonia, Esthonia, Courland, Smolensko, Severia, and Tsernichof; requiring in return a renunciation of all future claim to the imperial throne, which he apprehended the Poles might one day or another found upon the diploma of election which had been sent to Vladislaf. These terms were at once embraced; but Uladislaf pretended that the diploma was lost, and the Russians were forced to close the treaty without receiving the document to which they looked with so much anxiety.

The reign of Mikhail was distinguished by moderation. He appears to have directed his whole energies to the task of restoring the country to peace and stability. In the short and incidental wars in which he was engaged, we discern the spirit of the mediator rather than that of the ambitious commander: his object was peace, and not glory: he knew that what Russia wanted was restoration from the disorders and calamities that had so long enfeebled her, and he laboured zealously to restore the debilitated body to the healthful exercise of its functions. When he ascended the throne, the administration of justice was lax and capricious, the laws were inefficient and involved, commerce was depressed nearly to extinction, and all the institutions of the empire were in a state of confusion. It was his care to infuse a new vigour into the government, and by a cautious conservative policy to replace the people in a condition to profit by the restoration of public security. The period of his reign was the term of convalescence; that which followed was the development of restored strength.

But Russia, always the victim of calamities, was not destined to pass through the stages of her recovery

without a check. Mikhail, on the approach of death (1645), committed the education of his son, Alexis, then only fifteen years of age, to Morosof, a noble of an ambitious and intriguing temper, who, like Boris, resolved to profit as largely as he could by the important trust that was thus placed in his hands. He accordingly appropriated to himself the highest and most valuable offices; dismissed from about the court all those persons who were unlikely to submit to his wishes, supplying their places with instruments of his own; and finally, in order to render the link of connection still more close, and to enlarge still farther the bounds of his power, he married the sister of the czarina, thus drawing the young czar Alexis within the range of his personal influence. Being a man of active habits and prompt discernment, he addressed himself at once to the re-organisation of the army, upon which he relied for support at a future time, and which he knew would procure him immediate popularity. He reinforced his effective troops by the introduction of foreigners, whose especial duty it was to improve the discipline of the soldiers: he built establishments for the manufacture of arms; and threw up fortifications on the frontiers, to protect the country against Poland and Sweden. These improvements were all hailed with satisfaction · and, had he pursued consistently the course with which he opened, he might have continued uninterruptedly to rule Russia in the name of the czar. But he betrayed his grand design before he had succeeded in sufficiently propitiating the regards of the people.

From the corruption with which he acted, it would appear that the whole object which he proposed to himself was the accumulation of wealth, and that the political power at which he aimed was merely sought as a means for the accomplishment of his final end. The judges were made amenable to the venal profligacy of Morosof. Their decisions were openly purchased by the highest bidder; and to such an incredible height did they carry their injustice, that they kept a number of

the lowest wretches in their pay, who were ready at all times to come forward as witnesses for a bribe. By abetting these practices of perjury, for which they were paid, the judges swelled the appeals to Morosof, who, in addition, shared in the profits of the disgraceful sale of law. The oppressions that sprang out of this violation of the integrity of the tribunals were numerous and grievous. Rich men were denounced on false charges; suborned witnesses brought direct and circumstantial evidence against them; and the unfortunate accused were condemned to death, and their property confiscated to the service of the state, or rather to the private revenues of Morosof. The exorbitant and insatiable desire to obtain wealth did not cease with these iniquities. New taxes were imposed with great severity; all the necessaries of life were placed under a heavy impost; and monopolies were created in different places, out of which the guardian of the czar wrung the utmost per-centage. The increase of taxation, the pressure of the monopolies, the obstruction of justice, and the haughty bearing of the grandees who had grown into favour round the arrogant Morosof, awoke in the people an universal feeling of indignation. They perceived the advance of a new tyranny, and resolved to arrest its progress. There were many amongst the most influential classes who had suffered severely; and they, taking advantage of the growing discontents, availed themselves of every opportunity that presented itself of inflaming the population. In Moscow, where the source of the injustice lay, the first explosion took place. The inhabitants beset the avenues of the Kremlin with petitions, in which they painted vividly the oppressions under which they laboured, and besought of the czar to relieve them from the presence of the obnoxious minister and his adherents. These petitions, in which the numerous kinds of injustice that had been sanctioned by Morosof were detailed, never reached the hands of the czar. The minister had made all his arrangements so securely, that the remonstrances of the people were forwarded in vain to the

palace. The populace at length saw the fruitlessness of applying in that way to the czar; and one day, as he was passing from the church to his palace, they intercepted him, and, reiterating their complaints, accompanied with loud outcries and fierce gestures, demanded the appointment of righteous judges in the place of those who had corrupted their officers. Alexis heard their statements with patience, and promised to institute a strict inquiry into the grievances for which they claimed redress, assuring them at the same time that the guilty persons should be visited with due punishment. The multitude, however, were not satisfied with the czar's promises; and, being too impatient to await the tardy process of an inquiry into facts which were so notorious, they proceeded at once to the houses of some of the public offenders, and plundered them of their wealth. Many acts of violence were committed in the excitement of the moment, but a distinct pledge that the author of the evils should be brought to condign punishment pacified them. It was with difficulty that they could be prevailed upon to consent that Morosof's life should be spared: the entreaties of the czar, who interceded for him in tears, failed to move them; and it was not until they had taken the life of the principal magistrate, and compelled Alexis to put one of the guilty judges to death, that they suffered Morosof to escape alive. The decision with which they acted saved Russia from another civil war. Alexis saw the peril of his position, and wisely resolved to release himself from so fearful a responsibility by removing the causes of complaint.

But discontents had also broken out in Novgorod and Pskof, which demanded promptitude on the part of the government. The wisdom and energy of Nikon, the metropolitan, a man who had raised himself by the force of his character from a low station to the patriarchal dignity, preserved the former city; while a slight interference sufficed to quell the disorders of Pskof. In both places, the leading agents of the prevailing corrup-

tions were either restrained or dismissed, and no further consequences ensued.

At this period another impostor rose up. The race of the false Dmitris, it appeared, was not yet extinct. The son of an obscure linen draper suddenly advanced a claim to the throne of Russia, asserting himself at one time to be the son of the true Dmitri, and at another the son of the luckless Schnisky. Having tried both these expedients, and utterly failing in the attempt to excite a sensation in Poland and Sweden, upon whose aid he chiefly relied, he discovered that he had calculated upon a dangerous speculation. But it was too late. He had already imposed upon a few, and stood committed to his imposition. The conclusion of his forlorn adventures was tragical. Instead of reaching the throne to which he aspired, he died upon the gallows.

But Alexis had no sooner established peace at home, than he was compelled by the force of circumstances to embark in a foreign war. The Ukraine was in flames; and the hetman of the Cossacks, who had revolted from his allegiance to Poland, solicited aid from Muscovy, for which he offered in return to become vassal to the czar.

The quarrel between the Cossacks and the Poles was of some standing, and had been prosecuted on both sides for many years with varying success. The Cossacks, originally of Tartarian origin, sprang up in the fourteenth century, when Kief, the primitive Russian settlement, became annexed to the territory of Lithuania. The conduct of the government, particularly as it was manifested through the catholic clergy, who laboured zealously to convert these people from the Greek to the Roman church, produced general discontent; and great numbers of the inhabitants, in order to escape from the persecution of the professors of a religion which they held in abhorrence, emigrated to some desolate districts lying to the southward, near the mouth of the Dneipr, where they formed their first settlement. Their defenceless situation exposed them equally to the Tartars,

the Poles, and the Lithuanians; and, perhaps, to the necessity of being constantly prepared to resist invasion, may be attributed the form of government which they adopted, and which was a sort of military democracy. Every man capable of bearing arms was a soldier; and the chief, or hetman, who presided over the whole, was elected by the voice of the people at large. A community so constituted, and in such a neighbourhood, could not long maintain its freedom. The Cossacks soon fell under the rule of the Tartars, from which, however, they were released by the extinction of the Golden Horde, and the consequent dismemberment of the Tartarian empire. But this was only a temporary relief from inevitable subjugation; they were soon laid under contribution by the Poles, and they finally acknowledged the king of Poland as their guardian, their electoral rights, however, being left nominally free. But the haughty policy of the Polish nobility speedily made them feel that their freedom was really annihilated. In the course of time, the grant of lands in the Ukraine to the poor and rapacious nobility became more frequent and unjust. In the central districts of the republic, where the Polish landlords resided amongst their serfs, the influence of the tyranny was less felt, as the power of the lords of the soil was in some measure restrained by their residence amongst their vassals; but in those distant provinces which were never visited by the proprietors, and which were considered merely as a source of profit, without any reference to the happiness and welfare of the inhabitants, the exactions of the nobility through their underlings were cruel and iniquitous. Those arrogant lords abandoned their estates in the Ukraine to the stewardship of Jews, who farmed the land and traded upon the miseries of the population. In most cases the Israelites lent money in advance upon the produce of the soil; and, having thus a direct interest in extracting its resources to the full, ground down the people by scarcely leaving them the means of subsistence. The Cossacks, exasperated by these op-

pressions, first appealed to the diet, and then rose *en masse* to take revenge upon their tyrants.

The desultory depredations that followed were extensive, and the entire country was in a state of confusion; when a fresh outrage, committed upon an influential Cossack, gave a new direction to their energies, and concentrated their military power under one head. This Cossack was the veteran Bogdan Chmielnicki, who had won his fame at the point of the sword in many former wars. He possessed a mill and some lands near the banks of the Borysthenes, which the steward of a Polish lord secretly wished to appropriate to himself. The only way by which he could carry his object was to criminate Bogdan, and get him out of the way. He failed, however, in his charges, but, undaunted by legal discomfiture, he seized unceremoniously upon the property of the chief. Bogdan, outraged by this act of lawless violence, appealed to the diet at Warsaw; but his petition was treated with contempt. Goaded by disappointment and injustice, he fled to the Tartars for succour. In his absence the inhuman steward completed his infamous design, by violating the wife of his victim, whom he afterwards murdered, and setting fire to Bogdan's house, in the flames of which his infant son perished. He also caused another son, who had grown to man's estate, to be publicly whipped for some trivial, or perhaps imaginary offence. The wrongs of the infuriated Bogdan were now accumulated to a fearful amount; his story interested the Tartars on his behalf, and inspired the Cossacks, who had long panted for revenge, to unite themselves in a great effort for liberty. The fire spread from village to village; the whole of the Ukraine was in arms; and Bogdan, at the head of 40,000 Tartars and a much larger body of Cossacks, advanced upon the Poles. Two successive armies that attempted to oppose his progress were swept away before him, and their generals and chief officers, with 70,000 of the peasants, were captured and plunged into prison.

A misfortune which at this critical moment fell

upon Poland gave increased opportunity to the plans and progress of the infuriated Bogdan. The death of the king, Uladislas, paralysed the councils of the state. An interregnum followed, that was fatal to the domestic security of the kingdom. In this interval of misrule and hesitation, Bogdan seized upon the whole of the Ukraine, and directed his march towards Red Russia. The jesuits, who were the most prominent persecutors of the Greek church, and the Jews, who were the implacable oppressors of every denomination of Christians, were visited with unrelenting vengeance. His standard was followed by multitudes of Tartars from Bessarabia and the Crimea, and the ranks of his adherents were swelled on his advance by crowds of Mussulmans, Socinians, and Greeks, all of whom had their own motives for seeking revenge upon the obnoxious republic. The excesses committed by the reckless and savage invaders are described by the Polish historians to have been of an unparalleled character. The nobles were put to death with the utmost cruelty; their wives and daughters treated with barbarous ignominy, and afterwards slaughtered; and the peaceful inhabitants of the nunneries and monasteries subjected to a similar visitation of merciless revenge. But this was the inevitable retribution of an inflamed population, that had long groaned under accumulated wrongs, and that had now resolved to take the office of restitution into their own hands.

The assembling of the diet, to proceed to the election of a successor to the throne, produced a temporary cessation of hostilities on the part of Bogdan, who lay with his army encamped before Zamosk. The election of John Casimir appeared to justify the inaction of the insurgents, for that monarch was no sooner invested with the royal dignity, than he opened negotiations with Bogdan, the justice of whose complaints he fully admitted. The hetman received the communication with respect, and, confiding in the integrity of the monarch, countermanded the assault he had ordered to be made

on the fortress. At this juncture, the ferocious Jeremy Wisnowiecki, general of the grand duchy, who had committed the most terrific atrocities on the Arians and anabaptists in Lithuania, surprised the camp of the besiegers, and committed a terrible slaughter on the troops, who were lulled into confidence by the pacific disposition of the king. The consequence of this disastrous measure was the birth of fresh fury in the heart of Bogdan: he retreated to prepare for a new campaign, and shortly returned at the head of an enormous force, a part of which was contributed by the Tartar khan Islaf, and invested the intrenched camp of the treacherous general. The fate of the republic hung upon the issue; and if the adroit policy of the king had not succeeded in detaching the Tartars from the army of Bogdan, the result must have been fatal to Poland. But John Casimir succeeded, by promising a renewal of the annual tribute formerly paid by the Poles, in persuading Islaf to retire; and Bogdan, thus weakened by the defection of his powerful ally, was compelled to accept the terms offered by the king. The peace, however, was of short continuance. A new war broke out, in which tremendous losses were sustained on both sides, and the fortunes of the conflict fluctuated as circumstances gave the advantage of numbers to one or the other. At last Bogdan, resolved to strike a final blow, applied to the czar Alexis for aid, offering to become his vassal, if he would send 200,000 Muscovites into Lithuania to his succour. The czar at first hesitated to embrace this proposal, as he was not very willing to embroil himself in a war with Poland, and his scruples were not relieved by a superstitious appeal he made to Heaven, to know whether such a war would be agreeable to God. The way in which he tested this inquiry was by opposing to each other in the arena two wild bulls, the one representing Poland and the other Russia, relying upon the decision of the contest for the part he should take. Unfortunately Poland vanquished her antagonist in the mimic field, and Alexis shrank from

the contemplation of the real hazard. The patriarch, however, overcame his fears; and pointing out to him that the interests of religion demanded that he should embark in hostilities against catholic Poland, war was at last formally declared.

The situation of Poland at this moment was most favourable to the enterprise. The strength of the nation was exhausted; all was consternation and confusion. The submission of Bogdan, too, added such an acquisition of territory to the Russian dominion, including a stretch of country from Lake Ilmen to the Black Sea, that the success of the war could not admit of any doubt. If, however, Casimir had consented, which he refused to do, to restore to Alexis those places which had formerly been ceded to Poland, the czar would have been deprived of all reasonable pretext for hostilities; the obstinacy of the Polish monarch on that point furnished Alexis with the only slender excuse by which his aggression could be justified. The progress of the Russian triumphs was rapid and complete. Smolensko, Witepsk, Polotsk, Mohilof, Severia, and Semigallia, fell before the armies of Alexis; while his Cossack allies were subjugating Haman, Bratslaw, and other fortresses on the Moldavian frontier. These successes must have terminated in the annihilation of the independence of Poland, if they had not attracted the attention of Charles Gustavus of Sweden, who apprehended in the victories of Russia the gathering of a new power against himself. Resolved to arrest the further progress of the Russian arms in Poland, by advancing to appropriate, or at all events subdue, a portion of the enfeebled territory, he threw himself into Pomerania, at the head of 60,000 Swedes. His march was a series of brilliant triumphs: a miraculous fortune appeared to wait upon him. Poland, panicstruck, submitted to his name, from the Carpathian Mountains to the duchy of Courland; and John Casimir, astounded and dismayed, fled for safety into Silesia. Satisfied with what he had already achieved, and probably alarmed at the extraordinary progress of the Swede,

Alexis paused in his hostilities; but the impetuosity of the Lithuanians, who desired to escape from the hands of the czar, tempted them to solicit the protection of Sweden, thus provoking a new cause of quarrel, which terminated in a desultory and desolating warfare between the Muscovites and the Swedes. An irregular and destructive incursion into Sweden followed, in which villages were sacked, and their unarmed inhabitants put to the sword. A flying havoc, in which but little credit could be gained, marked the course of this broken movement. The Russians were not sufficiently disciplined, or skilled in the practice of arms, to come to an open battle with the more experienced troops of Charles Gustavus, crowned as they were with the laurels of the thirty years' war; and after harassing some of the unprotected districts, they prudently retired to propose a truce for three years. This measure was acceptable to both parties; and at the expiration of the truce in 1661, peace was confirmed, it being mutually agreed upon that the two powers should be placed on the same terms on which they stood when the former treaty of peace was ratified at Stolba in 1617.

In the meanwhile the victories of Charles Gustavus were checked in Poland by the gallantry and loyalty of the people. The devotion of the Poles was exhibited in the most magnanimous displays of heroism, and the invaders were at length finally driven out. But the possessions which Alexis had acquired were not so easily recovered; and in 1667 an armistice was agreed upon for thirteen years, by which many important provinces lying between Courland and Muscovy, and on the left bank of the Borysthenes, and some fortresses on the frontiers, were surrendered up to Russia. This armistice ripened into a formal peace in 1686, which confirmed the Russian rule over these vast possessions, and relinquished to the czar the supremacy over the Cossacks, who now became dependent upon the throne of Muscovy.

Thus freed from the burthens of war, and profiting

by the resumption of the territories, which in times of weakness had been surrendered to Poland, Alexis addressed himself to the more gratifying labours of domestic improvement. Agreeably to an oath he had taken at his coronation, he availed himself of every opportunity that offered to open negotiations and form connections with the courts of Europe, which imperceptibly led to the introduction of foreign arts and manufactures. He tendered some friendly services to the English king, Charles II., during the period of his exile, and sent a special ambassador to congratulate him on his restoration; but a commercial treaty, proposed to him by that monarch through his representative, Carlisle, was wisely declined by Alexis, because it would have been disadvantageous to the mercantile interests of Russia. At this time the czar took advantage of the calm that prevailed throughout the empire, to cause the copper and iron mines to be worked, to form manufactories, and to encourage the inventive genius of the country. The first two Russian vessels that ever were built were constructed under his superintendence.* His anxiety to ameliorate the codes of law, and to impress a spirit of general advancement upon the legislative and judicial functions, prompted him to call his states-general together, to decide on all questions of public interest. This measure exhibited a laudable desire to give to the people in some degree the advantage of representation; but the peculiar circumstances in which the empire was placed, the vast extent of territory it embraced, and the fluctuation to which it was exposed without and within, rendered it impossible to complete the political advantages which were shadowed forth in the popular appeals of Alexis.

But in the midst of these gradual improvements, the quiet of Russia was again disturbed by civil war. Dalgoruki, a Russian commander, heedless of the delicate charge of governing the Don Cossacks, who

* It was the sight of these vessels that, it is said, inspired Peter the Great with that ardour which carried him into the dock-yards of England.

were not only jealous of their liberty, but little scrupulous in their mode of asserting it, rashly ordered one of their popular leaders to be executed. The Cossacks, outraged by an act which they considered to be a direct infringement of their rights, broke out into open revolt; and Stenka Radzin, the brother of the deceased, placed himself at the head of the insurrection. He called upon them to revenge the death of their chief in the blood of his murderer; and in the name of their privileges, which he declared were no longer safe, he entreated them to rally under his banner for the recovery of their liberty. The Cossacks were easily influenced by language of this description; and accordingly the ranks of the rebellious Radzin were speedily increased by numerous bands, who were glad of any excuse that permitted them to return to the usages of a predatory life. Radzin ingeniously baited his promises with hopes of piratical expeditions on the Caspian, and into Persia, where it was known that vast treasures were to be won at the point of the sword. Nor did he confine his movements to the Cossacks alone. He knew that Russia contained many discontented spirits, and that it only required the exercise of adequate artifice to withdraw them from their allegiance. Resolved to leave no means untried to gain over the dissatisfied, he sent out crafty agents amongst them, whose especial business it was to represent in the most flattering terms the superior abilities and great resources of their master, and to promise, in his name, the immediate redress of all popular grievances. The design partially succeeded: but a still more likely device crowned it with still greater success. The celebrated patriarch Nikon, the victim of Novgorodian persecution, had recently been deposed, and condemned to the seclusion of a monastery. Great numbers of the Russians adhered to him throughout all his sufferings. His writings had rendered him famous; and those who sympathsied with him in his degradation considered him as a martyr sacrificed to truth. Radzin, taking advantage of these circumstances,

caused it to be spread abroad that Nikon had escaped from his monastery, and was associated with him in his enterprise; and that even the eldest of the princes of Moscow was so impressed with the justice and strength of his cause, as to place himself personally under his protection. To these forgeries he added another, which was equally well adapted to fix the wavering faith of the rabble. He stated that the czar felt himself to be so powerless in his struggle against the unpopular grandees, that he had actually applied to Radzin to assist him in crushing an order of men that had so long oppressed the people. These artifices had the desired effect: the discontented gladly embraced the proposals of the specious Cossack, which were rendered the more tempting by the free permission that accompanied them to rob and plunder without restriction; and the consequence was, that in an incredibly short space of time, Stenka Radzin found himself at the head of a promiscuous and ill-ordered army of 200,000 men.

A body so formidable in numbers must have worked considerable mischief, if its organization had been in keeping with its numerical pretensions. But it was a mere ragged gathering,—a loose banditti, badly provided with the resources of war,—disorderly, and uninspired by any single motive in common by which its physical capabilities could be concentrated on one object. A mass so undisciplined and ineffective could not have fallen under the command of a man less able to guide it than Stenka Radzin: he did not possess a solitary quality to carry him safely through an undertaking that was beset on all sides with so many perils. No sooner had he gained the power for which he panted, than he suffered it to escape from his hands. His bands were no sooner collected, than he allowed himself to be tempted by a promise of forgiveness from the czar to desert them and repair to Moscow. His gigantic scheme of revolution, which was to release the whole of the lands of the Don Cossacks, and es-

tablish him on the throne of Astrakhan, with the title of king, which he had already almost appropriated, evaporated in a breath. A report was spread of a promise of pardon, and of the desire of the czar to see the famous chief of the Don Cossacks in the capital; and Radzin, dazzled by so unexpected a declaration of grace, and glad, perhaps, to escape from the danger of a project which he now, we must suppose, trembled to contemplate, set out on his journey to Moscow. In vain did his personal friends warn him against the risk he encountered in placing confidence in so improbable a communication, made to him on the faith of an ataman of his nation. Radzin pushed forward, flushed with expectation; and although the first sight that presented itself to him on his approach to the capital was a gallows on a cart which had been sent forward to meet him as a prognostic of his fate, he still persevered, and entered Moscow only to expiate his rebellion by the sacrifice of his head. Astrakhan was immediately invested by the Russian troops, and 12,000 of the followers of Radzin gibbeted on the high roads, as a warning to the multitudes that lingered together in various parts of the disturbed territory. These executions struck the insurrectionists with awe; and a second attempt by an imitator of the decapitated Radzin to recall the spirit of resistance, failed to produce any effect upon the discomfited Cossacks.

Tranquillity was at length restored at an unavoidable expense of blood, which, however, by taking some lives spared many. But these proceedings, so essential to the internal security of the empire, were not viewed with indifference by Turkey. The subjugation of the Cossacks established a rampart on the Russian frontier, which effectually interposed between Muscovy and Turkey, and placed a formidable obstacle in the way of the incursions of the latter power. The emperor regarded the movements of the czar with jealousy; and perceiving in the pacification of the disturbed territories a fresh source of Russian power, he resolved, since he

could no longer harass the frontiers without exposing himself to considerable loss, to assail the autocrat through his enfeebled neighbour, Poland, who appeared to present an easy conquest to the ferocious Mahommedans. The design of the Turk was to crush Poland first, and then, with the strength of accumulated forces, to descend upon Russia. This ambitious project was speedily put into motion. The Turks threw themselves upon the Polish frontiers, and took possession of Kaminietz, an important fortress that commanded a favourable position. From this point they penetrated the Ukraine, and for a period carried on their campaign with signal success. But the genius of Poland, prostrated by a series of misfortunes, was not overcome: it was rekindled in the valiant John Sobieski, who advanced against the formidable invaders, who counted an army of 80,000 strong, at the head of an inferior force of about 10,000.

In the meantime, Alexis, who was bound by the treaty of Andrussof to render assistance to Poland in case of need, prepared to take the field. The interests of Russia being remotely involved in the issue, the czar, in addition to the display of an armament, despatched ambassadors to several of the Christian powers of Europe, to request their assistance in a war against the enemy of the Christian faith; but his appeals were disregarded by those monarchs, who had enough of business of their own to occupy their attention. It is recorded that, on this occasion, Alexis meditated a junction with Poland, as a means of ultimately annexing it to his own empire, and placing his son upon the vanquished throne. The failure of the proposed league, and the rapid victories of John Sobieski, who completely extirpated the enemy, dissolved a project which only remained to be accomplished at a more favourable opportunity.

At this juncture, Alexis died in the year 1676, and at forty-seven years of age. The immediate cause of his death is referred to the empiricism of an old Polish

woman, to whose medical skill the czar applied in preference to that of his physician.

The reign of Alexis was important to the consolidation of the throne of Muscovy. It completely established the second race in the imperial power, and helped to prepare the public mind for the extraordinary improvements that were speedily to follow. The chief features of his rule were the recovery of those territories which had been torn from the grasp of his predecessors, and the acquirement of sovereignty over the Cossacks. Thus the bounds of the empire were enlarged, and its former ascendency restored. But the qualities of the warrior were, fortunately for Russia, not unaccompanied by prudence, sagacity, and moderation in Alexis. He gave a direct interest to the people in the well-being of the state, by consulting the nobility, clergy, and burghers, in certain law reforms which he deemed it necessary to introduce; while he abolished the ancient and corrupt practice which consigned all prisoners of war to vassalage, under the personal control of the victors. All such prisoners he ordered to be sent into the uncultivated regions, for the purpose of colonizing those remote districts, and bringing them into a state of productiveness. He also turned his attention to the art of constructing ships, with the view of floating merchant-ships on the Caspian, for the enlargement of the maritime commerce of Russia; but the prosecution of the design, destined to be fulfilled by a greater man, was suddenly interrupted by the rebellion of Radzin, and the subsequent war with which the proceedings of Turkey threatened the empire. The general character of his government was that of mildness, patience, and integrity, tempered by a spirit of boldness, which gave a loftier tone to the virtues of endurance. After a reign of thirty-one years, during which he had greatly increased the power and promoted the happiness of the people, he descended to the grave amidst the regret and gratitude of his subjects.

CHAP. XVI.

DANGEROUS CUSTOM OF ALLIANCE WITH SUBJECTS. — INTRIGUES FOR THE THRONE. — FEODOR. — CHARACTER OF HIS ACTS. — HE DESTROYS THE RECORD-DEEDS OF THE NOBILITY, AND ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE THE COSTUME OF THE PEOPLE. — FRESH PLOTS UPON THE THRONE. — IVAN AND PETER ARE CROWNED. — PLOTS OF THE PRINCESS SOPHIA. — REVOLT OF THE STRELITZ. — YOUTH OF PETER. — SOPHIA ATTEMPTS HIS LIFE, AND IS DISMISSED FROM THE REGENCY. — PETER BECOMES SOLE SOVEREIGN OF RUSSIA.

One of the customs which Russia had, at former periods, derived from the east, was that of selecting the consort of the czar from amongst his own subjects. The apparent advantages of this practice were very doubtful, and had no other tendency than that of concentrating the internal force of despotic authority. It was urged that the selection of a native consort shut out all the evils of foreign influence, and preserved the affairs of the country free from external interference; but it was forgotten that the honour conferred upon a particular family engendered cabals in the state; that the multiplication of these marriages raised up by degrees a species of nobility superior to the rest of the aristocracy, inferior only to the sovereign power, and always in a state of faction, revolt, or intrigue; and that the jealousy which excluded foreign influence also excluded all the benefits of foreign alliances. The mischiefs which were inseparable from this custom were evident in those instances where the sovereign married twice, as was the case with Alexis. Both the families contested the glories of the relationship, and the distinction of the ascendency. Parties sprung up from the contract that gave, not an heir, but

many heirs, to the throne; and the result was, that faction infested the very avenues of the palace.*

By the first marriage of Alexis, his consort being the daughter of Miloflafskoi, a Russian boyard, the family of Miloflafskoi acquired great influence in the state, which, during the long period that ensued in the lifetime of the first czarina, they sedulously cultivated. Of that union eight children were born, two of whom were princes, Feodor and Ivan, and the remaining six princesses, one only of whom, Sophia, is known in history. The second marriage of the czar displaced the greatness of the Miloflafskoi, and elevated the family of the Narishkin in their place. Two children, Peter and Natalia, were the fruits of this union: but these would not have had any direct claims upon the succession did it not so happen that the princes Feodor and Ivan were both nearly incapacitated from reigning by imbecility; the former, whose powers of mind were not considerable, being of a very feeble bodily temperament; and the latter being a youth destitute of understanding. The death of Alexis restored to the Miloflafskoi their former ascendency, by restoring the throne to their hands; while the Narishkin entertained sanguine hopes of maintaining it in theirs, in consequence of the unfitness of the male heirs of the first line. Thus a fertile source of civil feuds was opened in Russia once more; and ruinous consequences must have ensued, were it not that amongst the disputants there was one master mind

* The manner in which the choice of the sovereign was made is characteristic of the origin of the custom. Private inquiries were set on foot, in the first instance, after the most beautiful girls, whose conduct appeared to entitle them to regard; and when a sufficient number were selected, they were invited to the palace, which they attended arrayed in their most costly apparel. Separate chambers were allotted to them, and a general table was laid out for their meals. During the day and in the evenings a great variety of entertainments were arranged for their amusement. While this interval of pleasure was going forward, the czar made his observations, watched them in private, and even listened secretly to their conversation. Some authorities assert that he visited their chambers at night, to see which of them slept quietest. Having, at last, after a persevering investigation into their characters, tempers, and acquirements, made his choice, he came and sat at table with them, and presented the chosen lady with a handkerchief and ring, as tokens of his favour. The rest were then dismissed with presents, and the favoured beauty was declared in public, receiving at the same time the title of grand princess. — See *M. Boltin*, &c.

that ultimately swept away the pretensions of all the rest.

The contending families rose up in discord at once. The Narishkin attempted to set aside the succession of Feodor and Ivan, on the ground of their incapacity, and to induce the country to acquiesce in the nomination of Peter, the elder child of the second marriage, then little more than three years of age. But the time was not ripe for this open declaration. Feodor, although physically weak, possessed excellent talents for government; and the tender age of Peter was a sufficient argument agains a claim so prematurely urged. Had the evidences of Feodor's imbecility been as decisive as those which could have been brought against Ivan, the ambition of the Narishkin might have worked its ends; but so long as one of the princes, and he the eldest, was able to assume the functions of government, the exertions of the friends and relations of Peter were hopeless. Feodor was crowned czar; and the Narishkin, defeated in their project, withdrew, for a time, from its further prosecution.

The most important legacy of duty bequeathed by Alexis to his successor was the war or dispute with Turkey, on the subject of the territory of the Cossacks, which the sultan had long endeavoured to appropriate to himself. This was at last closed by Feodor by a truce for twenty years, the Turks surrendering the contested limits to the Russians, whose sovereignty over the Cossacks now admitted of no further disturbance. In three years from the time of his accession he accomplished this desirable object, which is, perhaps, as much to be attributed to the skill and military genius of his minister, Vassili Galitzin, as to his own abilities, which were certainly not of a very brilliant character.

But Feodor's principal claims upon the good-will of his subjects, lay in the minute attention he paid to the administration of domestic concerns. He entered with considerable pains into the details of the judicial and municipal functions, and rooted out many of the cor-

rupt usages which had crept into them during ages of confusion and misrule. The small reforms which he effected, insignificant as they may appear in the page of history contrasted with the loftier achievements of the sword, were, notwithstanding, of great immediate utility. The verdicts of the judges were notoriously sold to the highest bidder*; it was almost impossible for a poor man to obtain justice; he could not pay for it, and that was the only way it was to be had. Feodor applied himself to the almost impossible task of making the protection of the law accessible to all classes; he endeavoured to disqualify the judges from their ancient immunities of private bribes, but the wily functionaries evaded his enactments. Bribes came in so many disguises, and through such secret channels, that no provision of the czar could wholly abolish them in a country where they had become a kind of right by prescription. Still he succeeded in abolishing the open practice, and visiting its public continuance with severe personal responsibility, which was something gained on behalf of the oppressed. It appears, indeed, that he dedicated a large share of his consideration to the unfortunate, and extended to them many benefits which in the irregular constitution of the laws they could not have secured by any appeal to the authorities. He caused the price of provisions to be regulated by an equitable standard, so as to bring it within the reach of the poor, and issued such rules as prevented the dealers in them from harassing the indigent. In addition to these benevolent objects, he also turned his attention to the distresses of the operative and industrious classes, and advanced money to those who required it in the pursuit of their business, taking it back at easy instalments. The police of Moscow, established long before, he found to be defective in many essential particulars,

* They are so still: and the reason assigned for it by an intelligent Russian gentleman to an English traveller was, that the treasury was too poor to pay the judges adequate salaries, and that, therefore, the czar was obliged to *wink* at their corruptions. — See *Moore's Journey from London to Odessa*. Paris, 1833.

and he improved its practical efficiency by many necessary and wise regulations. Such were the pursuits which chiefly engrossed the cares of Feodor. Minor matters, which penetrate the recesses of private life and make up much of its sum of contentment, are often neglected by monarchs, who, from their vast height, catch only the great features of the scene; but they constituted the main objects of Feodor's short reign.

It was reserved for him, however, to grapple with the arrogant nobility, and perform an act of courage which few even of his most distinguished predecessors would have attempted. The utmost vexations were experienced at court, from the family pride of the aristocracy; and to such an extent was this foolish reference to ancestry carried, that great inconvenience was experienced in the filling up of important trusts, in consequence of the prejudices that prevented one nobleman from serving in a post subordinate to another whose ancestry in the genealogical roll had stood at any time in an inferior position to an ancestor of the recusant. It was the custom of the noble families to keep books of their pedigree, in which was most scrupulously written down the full titles of their ancestors, with all the posts and honours they individually enjoyed at court, and in the civil and military departments. From these books the members of the noble families obtained the ready means of challenging the descent of their contemporaries; and when it happened that an appointment in any public station reduced the imaginary importance of an individual who could trace in his genealogy some loftier office, the greatest discontent prevailed amongst his party. Such pertinacious folly led to extensive consequences. Disputes and quarrels of a personal nature threw the public service into disorder, and the mischievous source of the spreading dissensions called loudly for suppression. At Moscow there was a public office for the registry of these family rolls, in which it was necessary to deposit accurate copies of the genealogical tables and service-register; so that whenever

any difference upon points of etiquette or heraldic distinctions arose, a reference to the authentic records might be had at the instance of either party. The frequency of these references, and the multiplicity of delays and commotions they occasioned, led Feodor at length to take the subject into serious consideration; and, with the advice of his minister, Galitzin, he adopted a decisive method of terminating this absurd and injurious practice. He issued a peremptory proclamation requiring all noble families to deliver into court faithful transcripts of their genealogical deeds, in order that they should be officially corrected in many particulars that had been erroneously stated. When the deeds had all been delivered in, he caused a convocation to be held of the principal men and the superior clergy of the empire, and deliberately laid the whole case before them. He addressed them in an eloquent harangue, exposing the absurdity and impolicy of the custom; and was followed by the patriarch, who urged upon the assembly the irreligious tendency of a practice that was calculated to divide and embitter the higher orders of the state, and to array the chief men against each other. The assembly, partly from conviction, but in a great measure from a sense of shame at the ridicule which had been cast upon their broils, acquiesced in the justice of the sentiments of the czar. The assent of the convocation was no sooner obtained, than Feodor ordered the whole of the records to be gathered in a heap in the court-yard of the palace, when they were quickly set on fire, and consumed to ashes. Apprehensive, however, that the jealous aristocracy might mistake the real motive by which he was moved, and anxious to show that it was not his design to obliterate the honours of the nobility, Feodor established a new set of books, in which the names and ranks of the noble families were inscribed with the requisite formality; but the ridiculous assumptions arising from especial merits were abolished for ever.

The tone of Feodor's administration was that of im-

provement. He saw the folly of maintaining old errors merely for the reverence that is supposed to be due to antiquity, and he did not hesitate on several points to combat national prejudices. He endeavoured to raise the people out of the slothfulness that is engendered by easy habitudes of mind, and he sought to impress upon them the value of intellectual energy. The monstrous pretensions of the nobility was not the only prejudice of a lofty kind he struck down. He had penetration enough to discern — acting, probably, on the hint of the circumstances by which he was surrounded — that the royal custom of choosing a wife from the native stock checked the intermixture of nations, and originated domestic disquietude; and, resolving to abolish it in his own person, he married a Polish lady, for whom he had conceived a passionate attachment. The church, which was greatly scandalised by such an innovation, spoke its warnings in vain; for Feodor, undisturbed by anathemas and remonstrances, plainly expressed his determination to make the lady his consort, whether the church approved or disapproved of his choice. The patriarch perceived that it was useless to urge the question any farther, and the imperial choice was left free to its own will. Another innovation was attempted by Feodor; but as it more nearly concerned popular feelings, it was not so successful. It had always been an object of concern to the wisest of the Russian czars to make the empire approximate in its usages to those of civilized countries, and to give it an European instead of an Asiatic character. The common dress of the people was nearly that of the Asiatics; some efforts had been made to substitute a costume in which the European character should prevail, but the force of habit had hitherto rendered them abortive. Feodor, desirous of approaching so delicate a reform by degrees, instituted occasional festive entertainments at court, requiring of all the persons who attended that they should wear a particular description of dress which he appointed, and which bore some resemblance to that ordinarily worn by the Poles.

This reform, with others imaged or outlined in the reigns of Feodor and his progenitors, were all subsequently fulfilled by the daring genius of Peter.

After he had accomplished much good, and laid the foundation of still more, Feodor expired in 1682, after a brief reign of six years; during which period his physical and mental powers were exerted to the utmost stretch of their capacity. A Russian historian* laments him as one who was the joy and delight of his people, and whose death plunged Moscow into as deep a grief as was exhibited in Rome on the decease of Titus. The panegyric is as overwrought as its source is suspicious; but there is no doubt that Feodor is entitled to the praise of having meant well and acted honestly.

The question of the succession was now again thrown open to discussion, and the family feuds were revived. Ivan, the next in succession, was nearly blind, and, according to some historians, nearly dumb, and inferior in mind and body; and shortly before his death Feodor expressed his wish that his half-brother, Peter, then between nine and ten years of age, should be nominated to the throne; a nomination of which Ivan had just sense enough to approve. The imbecility of Ivan was so great that, were it not for the influence of the family to which he belonged, and the bold and ambitious spirit of his sister Sophia, he must have been set aside at once, and Peter without further difficulty raised to the sovereignty. The Miloflafskoi, however, were resolved to preserve the right of succession in their own blood; and Sophia, a princess of singular beauty and high mental endowments, in the meridian of youth, and possessed of indomitable courage, set the example of contesting the throne, first in the name of her idiot brother, and next in her own name: for when her plans were ripe she did not scruple to declare that she aspired to the sceptre in the default of the rightful heir. But as all her machinations were care-

* Sumarokof.

fully conducted with a colour of justice on behalf of Ivan; she escaped from the charge of interested motives, which, in the early part of the plot, would have defeated her grand object.

While Sophia was employed in devising her plans, the Narishkins urged with unabating activity the claims of Peter. They represented the impropriety of placing a fool upon the throne, whose wits were scarcely subtle enough to take charge of his own interests, and who was, therefore, a most unfit person to be intrusted with the interests of a great empire. Friends arose in different quarters for both parties, and the city was thrown into consternation. But the Miloflafskoi had the advantage of possession: the keys of power were in their hands: the officers of the state were in their immediate confidence, and the bands of the strelitz, the janissaries of Russia, were under their control. Sophia, availing herself of these fortunate circumstances, pleaded with her supplicating beauty in the name of her brother; besought the strelitz, by arts of fascination which were irresistible, to make common cause with her; and where her eyes failed to impress their sluggard hearts, she was bountiful in money and promises. A body so corrupt and slavish as the strelitz were easily won by bribes to any offices of depredation, and they accordingly declared for the beautiful and prodigal Sophia. The accession of 14,000 soldiers to her side — men who were ready at any moment to deluge the capital in blood — determined the scales at once. It was necessary in the first instance to exterminate the Narishkins, the formidable supporters of Peter; and next, if it could be accomplished with safety, to make away with the life of the prince. A rumour was accordingly disseminated that the Narishkins had compassed the death of Feodor, in order to make room for the young Peter; that they had poisoned him through the agency of foreign physicians; and that they contemplated a similar act of treachery towards Ivan. The zeal of the Narishkins seemed to justify

these charges; and the populace, who were universally in favour of the direct lineal succession, were brought to believe them; particularly as Galitzin, the favourite minister of Feodor, was the chief counsellor and friend of Sophia. Affairs were now ripe for revolt. The chiefs of the strelitz, having previously concerted their plans, broke out into open violence; and for three days in succession this band of legalised plunderers committed the most extravagant excesses in the streets of Moscow, secretly abetted by the encouraging patronage of Sophia. In their fury they murdered all those officers of the state whom they suspected to be inimical to the views of the princess; and bursting into the palace of the czars, demanded the lives of the Narishkins. Two brothers of Natalia, the widow of Alexis, were sacrificed on the spot, and sixty of her immediate kindred were shortly after put to death in the most cruel manner. The czarina herself was forced to flee for safety from the capital, accompanied, providentially for the destiny of Russia, by the young prince Peter. For sixty versts she fled in consternation, carrying the boy, it is reported, in her arms: but the ferocious strelitz had tracked her footsteps, and followed close upon her path. Her strength at last began to fail: her pursuers were rapidly gaining on her; she could hear the sound of their yells, and the tramp of their approaching feet: her heart trembled at the horrors of her situation, and in despair she rushed into the convent of the Trinity to seek for a last shelter in the sanctuary. The strelitz, uttering cries of savage triumph, followed on the moment: the despairing mother had just time to gain the foot of the altar, and place the child upon it, when two of the murderous band came up. One of them seized the prince, and, raising his sword, prepared to sever the head from the body, when a noise of approaching horsemen was heard without: the ruffian hesitated — his fellow murderers at the distant part of the church were struck with terror — dismayed by the apprehension of some sudden change in the fortune of the day, he abandoned

his grasp of the prince and fled, and Peter the Great was preserved to Russia.

The immediate result of those violent efforts of the strelitz, was the declaration of the sovereignty in the name of Ivan. That prince, however, trembled at the prospect of incurring the responsibility of a trust to which he felt himself to be unequal, and entreated of his counsellors to permit his half-brother Peter to be associated with him in the government. This request, which was considered on all sides reasonable enough, could not be refused without increasing the difficulties of Sophia's party, and rendering such further measures necessary as might probably betray her motives too soon. It was therefore sanctioned by the nobles; and on the 6th of May, 1681, the coronation of Ivan and Peter was celebrated in due form; Sophia being nominated regent, on account of the imbecility of the one and the youth of the other. Thus far Sophia had carried her purpose. She was now in possession of the power to which her ambition tempted her to aspire; but she panted to have that power formally assigned and publicly acknowledged. In order the more effectually to exclude Peter from any future lien upon the throne, she brought about a marriage between Ivan and a young Soltikof; trusting to the issue for an insurmountable obstacle in the path of the prince, whose dawning genius, even at that early age, she appeared to dread.

But these were not the only means resorted to by the daring Sophia to crush Peter's pretensions. She resolved not only to attempt his exclusion from the throne by placing impediments in his way, but by rendering him incapable of reigning should the opportunity ever arise. To this end, she banished him in his boyhood to an obscure village, and condemned him to associate with low companions, by whose example she hoped to corrupt his heart and debase his understanding. General Menzies, a learned Scotchman *, who had been appointed

* Bassville.

to superintend his education by Alexis, was removed from that office because he refused to promote the infamous plans of the princess: and Peter was consigned to the retirement of a miserable retreat, kept in ignorance of those duties and acquirements with which it was essential to his station that he should become acquainted, and exposed to the consequences of immoral habits, vulgar amusements, and such practices as were calculated to destroy his mind and impair his constitution. This inauspicious opening of his career accounts for that part of his character which to the last retained the impress of unrestrained passion; but it also enhances the merit of his greatness, which was a signal triumph over the evil effects of a bad education. The vices of his life may be referred to the influence of his education; his virtues were all his own.

In the mean while the strelitz, who had elevated Sophia to the imperial power, became dangerous and oppressive to their mistress. As they had raised her to the throne, they expected that she should reign for them alone. She felt that she was gradually sinking into a slave, and that the instruments of her own plots were beginning to assume a tyrannous espionage over her actions. Like the prætorian guards of the Roman emperors, they affected the right of dethroning as well as enthroning; and, placing spies about her person, they continued to harass her by exorbitant demands, which at last grew so excessive that she was compelled to take some decisive step to release herself from the despotism of her creatures. Prince Kovanskoi, the commander of the strelitz, who had been the confidant of Sophia throughout the whole term of her machinations, being a man of a proud nature, was jealous of the ascendancy of Bazil Galitzin — considering that his share in the dynastic struggle gave him equal, if not greater claims, to a participation in the government. His discontent broke out in a proposal to Sophia that she should marry one of her sisters to his son. The regent, detecting in this proposition the latent purpose of the prince,

haughtily refused to sanction a measure that could not but lead to great confusion and extensive feuds. Kovanskoi, stung by so unexpected a reply, declared his determination to revenge the slight. The strelitz rose on behalf of their master, and Moscow was suddenly involved in a civil strife that promised to become sanguinary in its results. The regent, accompanied by the czar Ivan, fled to the monastery of the Trinity, twelve leagues from Moscow, for safety. The building was strongly fortified, and the imperial party prepared to defend themselves to the last extremity. The court at Moscow, however, was not inactive during the brief interval. A numerous force of armed soldiers, among whom were several foreigners, was rapidly collected, the strelitz were surprised, and Kovanskoi was taken prisoner and beheaded on the spot. The strelitz, infuriated by the fate of their commander, advanced upon the monastery; but learning on the way that they might expect a warm reception, they were seized with a sudden panic, and their previous resolution gave way to consternation. The court, taking advantage of their fears, demanded as an act of justice that she should surrender the principal ringleaders to the punishment they deserved, and that every tenth man of every regiment should be given up as a compromise for the remainder. These conditions were no sooner complied with than the victims were ordered to prepare for death. The unfortunate wretches took a melancholy leave of their families, and then went in procession — two thirds of them carrying blocks, and the remainder bearing axes, — to the monastery to receive the sacrament. When they arrived at the open space in front of the monastery, they placed their heads on the blocks they had brought with them, in the presence of a great concourse of people, and silently awaited their doom. The implicit submission of the conspirators had the effect of softening their fate. The most guilty amongst them were executed, and the rest were dismissed to the regiments that lay on the frontiers, in order to remove

them from the capital. But Sophia never placed confidence in their body again.

The party that favoured the cause of the young czar Peter was still employed in seeking the means of dispossessing Sophia; and an opportunity soon arose of weakening her power, by an attempt to bring her minister, Galitzin, into disgrace. New hostilities had broken out between Poland and Turkey, the sultan being at the same time involved in hostilities with Germany. It was manifestly the interest of Poland and Germany to induce Russia to take a part in the war by employing the common enemy on the side of the Crimean Tartars; and they mutually solicited Russia to undertake a diversion there in order to weaken, by distributing, the army of the Turks: but it was also manifest that, while the Russians had so much to occupy their attention at home, it was their interest to maintain a peace which they had purchased by a protracted war. Galitzin, whose abilities as a politician were of a much higher order than his military talents, was sensible of the advantages of neutrality, and on behalf of Sophia refused to accede to the wishes of the petitioning powers. Some secret friends of Peter, however, who were members of the council, endeavoured to show, by such arguments and persuasions as they could command, that it was of importance to the future security of the empire to harass so formidable an antagonist and rival as the sultan, particularly at a moment when he was engaged in a war that already made a double demand on his resources, and when it required but a slight demonstration of strength to make a considerable impression. They knew, of course, that the enterprise was not only unnecessary, but impolitic: but their object was to bring the administration into disfavour; and they hoped also, by flattering the skill of Galitzin, to induce him to take the field at the head of the army, or that, by ridding the capital of him for a time, they might the more effectually advance the claims of Peter. Galitzin was not inaccessible to the language of panegyric; and, suf-

fering himself to be persuaded into a course which his own judgment condemned, he consented to take charge of the expedition. His army was 300,000 strong; but he was so inadequate to the duties of the field, that he wasted his enormous power in fruitless sacrifices, and consumed his time in marches and countermarches that failed to produce any results. During the campaign 40,000 soldiers fell, and discomfiture attended his progress. His partisans at home caused the most brilliant reports of his successes to be circulated; and even, when it was not possible to conceal the unfortunate issue, went so far as to impute the cause of failure to the misconduct of the hetman of the Cossacks, whom they banished to Siberia for the sake of appearances. But the people could not be so easily imposed upon: they openly condemned the whole business, and heaped unmeasured odium upon Sophia and her incapable general. This was exactly what the friends of Peter desired to accomplish. To render Galitzin unpopular was one step towards the advancement of the young czar.

During the progress of these manœuvres at Moscow, Peter was sufficiently busy in his obscurity. The distance at which he was kept from the throne, while it excluded him from the advantage of an education consistent with his circumstances, also preserved him from catching the contagion of court effeminacy. Corrupted as he was by association with abandoned companions, he extracted, even from this unfavourable intercourse, some elements of knowledge and improvement. Fifty young Russians, selected for their dissolute tastes, had been placed about his person; many of whom were mere adventurers, the waifs of fortune, abandoned to the most vicious courses, and reckless alike of fame and honour. The purpose for which they were appointed — to degrade the mind of the czar — appears to have been so well understood, that they were called by the familiar term of his playmates, or, more appropriately translated, his *amusers*. These young men, into whose habits Peter threw himself with an enthusiasm which

distinguished all his actions, soon became sincerely attached to his person: the master mind rapidly acquired the ascendancy. Instead of leading him, they were led by him, although the influence of their experience gave the tone to this intercourse. At the head of this band of rash spirits was one Lefort, whose share in the subsequent councils of Peter inspires his history with an interest which entitles him to distinct personal consideration.

Lefort was born at Geneva, in 1652. He was originally intended for a commercial situation, but his natural tendency towards a life of unrestrained indulgence unfitted him for the quiet routine of mercantile duties, and plunged him into a wild course of extravagance and profligacy. The inevitable consequence was the accumulation of debts, which at last pressed so severely upon him that he was compelled to leave Geneva. We next meet him at Marseilles, in the capacity of a cadet. This station, however, does not appear to have suited him; for after having remained there for some time, he went into Holland, and falling in with an officer who was raising troops for the czar Alexis, he enlisted under him, and went with the new levy to Archangel. At this crisis of his fortune Alexis died, and the foreign troops, which had just been raised, remained at Archangel neglected by the government. During his progress from place to place, Lefort, who possessed very brilliant talents, had mastered the Dutch and German languages with facility; and perceiving, in the awkward position in which he was placed at Archangel, amongst foreign mercenaries who were ignorant of the country, the great advantage which might accrue to him from a knowledge of the Russian language, he immediately applied himself to the study of it, and acquired it rapidly. This important object brought him to Moscow, where his handsome person and brilliant wit procured him the favour of the Danish ambassador, to whom he became secretary. This situation introduced him to several families of distinction, and finally led to his

marriage with a young lady of large fortune. His acquaintance with the czar crowned his fortunes. Peter saw in the self-educated foreigner a man adapted to his own views, who could enter with him into the most riotous pleasures, and retire at will to the communion of books and the study of mankind. The experience of Lefort, his powers of discernment, his extensive knowledge, and the vivacity of his character, recommended him to Peter's friendship; and the good will that sprang up in the youth of the czar lasted to the end of Lefort's life. Peter, like Napoleon, chose his friends from amongst his earliest associates, and selected them, not by the claims of illustrious descent, but by the individual qualities of greatness they discovered. Two of his most constant and distinguished advisers, Lefort and Mentzikof, were men raised by Peter from obscurity.

The genius of Peter was characteristically developed in the uses to which he dedicated his little band of friends. Much of their time was spent in profligate amusements; but the military spirit of the young czar soon gave a nobler direction to their energies. He formed his companions into a corps of mimic soldiers, and, compelling each person to pass through all the gradations of the service, he set the example of strict discipline himself, by entering the ranks as a drummer, in which capacity he performed all the duties it enforced; then he became a private soldier; next, an officer; and lastly, when he was fully qualified by experience, the commander of the troop. Nor was this display of regularity the mockery of sport, but the actual occupation of minds destined afterwards to fulfil in the field the promise of a rigid education in military acquirements. Peter erected fortifications, and wheeled the earth of the entrenchments in a barrow made by his own hands: the village became a military school; his friends were the pupils of a system; they exercised and armed with punctuality; and the bounds of their

exploits appearing to be too confined for their purpose, they spread themselves gradually, until a portion of their juvenile force occupied a district in the neighbourhood.

These toils of the body did not, however, exclusively engross the attention of Peter. He felt that the knowledge of foreign languages and mathematics was as necessary to the formation of the future sovereign, as the acquirement of military tactics; and under the instructions of Lefort, in the intervals of repose from the fatigues of the morning, he made a rapid progress through the elementary branches of literature and science. An acquaintance with one language led him by an easy method to enlarge his philological studies, and Peter was speedily enabled to estimate the advantages of civilisation by a personal examination of its results in the modern languages of Europe. Had his education been conducted upon steady principles—had he been constrained into the tasks which his genius, spurning the impediments that lay before him, voluntarily sought—he might probably have wearied of the monotony and drudgery of his labours, and been but little the wiser of a course that curbed his natural propensities. But the resistance he had to conquer nerved him against difficulties; and the very pleasure and triumph of defeating the malignity of those who would have condemned him to the slavery of the passions and the trammels of ignorance, inspired him with a resolution to succeed, which he needed but to form to carry into effect. From the very misfortunes, therefore, that oppressed his youth, the energetic spirit of the czar derived the means of greatness.

The proceedings of Peter and his companions were treated with contempt by Sophia, who deemed that the parade and military display of his little troop were merely the idle frolics of boys, and that the midnight carousals and licentious habits of the band would finally render Peter incompetent to assume the sove-

reignty, even should his friends be so extravagant as to make any serious movement on his behalf. She did not detect, under the mask of pleasure, the profound and varied pursuits that occupied his retirement; she only saw a boy of fifteen buried in obscurity, and wasting his hours in dissipation. She anticipated that his mind would be degraded by sensual enjoyments, and she spoke of his military employments with derision: but Peter, sensible of the advantages he was acquiring, persevered with unshaken constancy; and, urged at length by his friends to show himself in the capital, began to appear in the senate, taking his seat by the side of the imbecile Ivan. Nor did his determination to assert his rights terminate in this show of resolution; for he carried his views still farther, by marrying, at the age of seventeen (1689), a Russian lady, the daughter of Colonel Lapuchin, for the purpose of defeating the scheme of Sophia in reference to her brother's wife, who was understood to be in a state of criminal pregnancy. These bold proceedings seemed at last to awaken Sophia to the character of Peter. Two years before, she had caused her image to be stamped on the coin of the realm, and her name to be added to those of the czar in the public documents; but the peremptory bearing of Peter in the senate assured her that the sinister usurpation would not be suffered much longer. It was time, therefore, to resolve upon some decisive movement. Peter was rapidly gaining ground in popular favour: his genius had already made itself felt: the people were prepared to adopt him as their sovereign whenever the fitting opportunity arrived; and Sophia saw that her only escape from the growing disaffection, was to make away with the life of her rival. Before, however, she came to this resolution, several bitter contentions took place between them in the senate,—the secret feelings entertained by each breaking out on every occasion of opinion and precedence. These differences at last came to a formal rupture on the occasion of meeting at a

solemn office of religion. Sophia insisted on attending the ceremony as regent, or, according to some authorities, as czarina. Peter forcibly denied her claim, and an angry altercation ensued. Sophia, however, was not to be moved from her purpose; and Peter, feeling that the moment was not propitious for a dispute involving such important consequences, wisely withdrew, leaving Sophia to assume an authority against which he protested in the name of the sovereign power. This event brought the quarrel to issue, and Sophia resolved upon the assassination of the man she now began to fear.

The strelitz, as before, were nominated as the instruments of her vengeance. Six hundred of their body were despatched under cover of the night to the residence of the young prince, whom they hoped to find defenceless; but Peter's friends at the capital had warned him of his danger, and he had already retired to the monastery of the Holy Trinity, so often the retreat of the czars. There calling around him his personal friends, and the friends of Russia, he required at their hands the means of setting aside an usurpation that was becoming oppressive in the last degree: the call was met with promptitude; and a great number of the nobility and of the army, including nearly all the foreign troops, deserted Sophia, and declared for Peter. The strelitz, whose sanguinary character was not sustained by any traits of courage, fell away from an enterprise which they perceived was encompassed with danger: and Sophia, defeated in her unworthy design, attempted to carry by an affectation of good-will, what she had failed to accomplish by treachery. She commissioned mediators to wait upon Peter, proffering certain terms of accommodation, and expressing her desire to bring their dispute to an amicable adjustment. But Peter, who had now the power of restitution in his own hands, refused to accept of any terms short of her complete abandonment of all authority; and, representing to the

commissioners the baseness of Sophia's conduct, soon prevailed on them to resign their trust and embark in his cause. Finding that her representatives had yielded to the statements of Peter, she determined to try the effect her own presence would produce. She accordingly set out from Moscow, accompanied by a guard, and prepared to play her part with firmness and duplicity, relying upon the influence of her sex and her beauty to regain the hearts of the soldiery. But Peter was inexorable: he refused to see her; and sending persons to meet her on the road, he demanded the surrender of Scheglovitof, the commander of the strelitz; the instant banishment of Galitzin, the crafty minister of her councils; and her full resignation of all right or title to the throne of Russia. These conditions, hard as they were, Sophia was not in a situation to contest. She was deserted on all sides: the populace received her with clamorous indignation, heightened by the report of her recent attempt on the life of the young czar; and she felt that she grasped at a shadow which eluded her at every turn. The terms proposed by Peter were passively fulfilled. The commander of the strelitz was immediately beheaded; Galitzin banished to the borders of Archangel, where he and each member of his family were allowed a daily sum of three kopecks (of the value of about three halfpence English) for their maintenance; and Sophia herself was compelled to shave her head and retire for life to a nunnery. Great numbers of the strelitz were put to death with a cruelty characteristic of the age, but deservedly inflicted for the numerous acts of violence they had from time to time committed.

Peter was now sole sovereign of Russia; for although Ivan lived until the year 1696, he was merely nominally associated in the government. His name alone remained; the spirit of Peter controlled and inspired the whole machinery of the state. On the 11th of September, 1689, immediately after the execution of the rebellious strelitz, Peter issued a proclamation, setting forth that

for the future the name of the regent should no longer be mentioned in any public instrument whatever; her image was struck from the coinage; and all her personal favourites and servants were dismissed from the Kremlin.

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